

# **Sweeter Than Honey, More Precious Than Gold**

*Meditations on Psalm 119*

Wayne Davies

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How sweet are your words to my taste,  
sweeter than honey to my mouth!  
Psalm 119:103

The law from your mouth is more precious to me  
than thousands of pieces of silver and gold.  
Psalm 119:72

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ONE LAST THING

# AN INTRODUCTION TO THE LONGEST CHAPTER IN THE BIBLE

Greetings, my friend! And welcome to this journey through Psalm 119, the longest chapter in the Bible. I am so glad you decided to join me, for I have been digging through this 176-verse treasure chest of divine truth for the past few years and I pray you'll find this heavenly excursion to be as enjoyable as I have.

Let's familiarize ourselves with the psalm by considering the following introductory topics.

## The Author

Many psalms include the author's name in the heading. This one does not. But the author is quite transparent about the circumstances of his life, which are most difficult. Wicked men, called "rulers" (v. 23, 161), are persecuting him "without cause" (v. 86, 161).

So even though we don't know the author's name, we know he is experiencing much suffering and affliction. And these trials and tribulations are consuming him because he mentions them in at least 64 of the 176 verses in the psalm!

Please go to the Appendix and see for yourself. Here you'll find the following lists:

## ALL 64 VERSES ABOUT THE AUTHOR'S DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES

Yes, all 64 of them, in numerical order.

## VERSES ABOUT THE AUTHOR'S ENEMIES WHO ARE PERSECUTING HIM

Of the 64 verses in the first list, 31 verses specifically describe these "rulers" who are persecuting him. Go ahead and read through this list to get a feel for the kind of people he is dealing with.

## OTHER VERSES ABOUT SUFFERING & AFFLICTION IN GENERAL

These 9 verses do not mention his enemies but are more general descriptions of his situation. This man is having an incredibly tough life, for sure.

## PRAYERS FOR PHYSICAL SALVATION

Many verses in this psalm contain a prayer. Some have two or three prayers. Altogether, there are at least 75 prayers in this psalm! And many of these prayers are for physical salvation. The author is crying out to God for protection, safety, and life itself. He wants to survive this ordeal, and after reading about his situation, isn't that understandable?

## The Structure

Not only is this the longest chapter in the Bible, but it is also one of the most unique chapters from a literary standpoint. Open your Bible and you'll see that the 176 verses are divided into 22 sections, or stanzas. Each stanza has 8 verses. And each stanza has a title. Stanza 1 is called "Aleph", which is the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Stanza 2 is called "Beth", the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet. And so on. All 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet are represented.

Why do the stanzas have the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet as a title? In each stanza, all 8 verses begin with that particular letter of the Hebrew alphabet. All 8 verses in Stanza 1 begin with "Aleph" and all 8 verses in Stanza 22 begin with "Taw".

Think about this literary structure and be amazed at the effort required to produce this psalm!

### The Theme

The literary structure becomes even more amazing when you consider that virtually all 176 verses have a common theme - the Word of God. The author uses many synonyms to refer to the Bible (more on that in a moment), but almost every verse in the Bible's longest chapter is about the Bible!

Isn't that amazing?

Notice that I said "virtually" all the verses are about the Word. There are only five verses that do not specifically mention Scripture - verses 84, 90, 121, 122, and 132 are notable in this regard. Verse 90 is about God's faithfulness and power as Creator; verse 132 speaks of his mercy. Verses 84, 121, and 122 are three of the many verses that express the psalmist's desire for deliverance from oppression.

Let's reflect on this simple fact - the author wrote a 176-verse hymn. Yes, like every psalm, this is a hymn - it was written to be sung! And 97% of the sentences in this hymn are about the written Word of God in all its glory.

Let this fact take your breath away! And these 176 verses were written by a man who was literally on the run for his life, yet he remained consumed with thoughts of God and his Word. "Though I constantly take my life in my hands, I will not forget your law" (v. 109).

The author uses several Hebrew words in reference to Scripture. In the New International Version, the most common ones are: law, word, commandments, statutes, precepts, and decrees. Other translations will also use synonyms such as testimonies, judgments, and ordinances.



Most of these Old Testament words are very familiar to us. "Law" means instruction or teaching and has a much broader meaning than merely the commands given by God to Israel on Mount Sinai (i.e. the Ten Commandments and the rest of the laws found in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy). "Word" means what God has said, which was subsequently written down and preserved for us to read and "hear" today.

### The Length

Psalms 119 is 176 verses - which makes it not only the longest psalm but also the longest chapter in the Bible. And the length may intimidate you and perhaps even cause you to shy away from reading it. Oh how I pray that is not the case with you, my dear friend!

If the psalm's length has somehow diminished your desire to study it, you are not alone.

Charles Spurgeon, the well-known 19th-century British preacher, wrote a 7-volume commentary on the Psalms entitled, "The Treasury of David." Here's what he had to say about Psalm 119:

I have been bewildered in the expanse of the One Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm . . . Its dimensions and its depth alike overcame me. It spread itself out before me like a vast, rolling prairie, to which I could see no bound, and this alone created a feeling of dismay.

Its expanse was unbroken by a bluff or headland, and hence it threatened a monotonous task, although the fear has not been realized. This marvelous poem seemed to me a great sea of holy teaching, moving, in its many verses, wave upon wave; altogether without an island of special and remarkable statement to break it up.

I confess I hesitated to launch upon it. Other psalms have been mere lakes, but this is the main ocean. It is a continent of sacred thought, every inch of which is fertile as the garden of the Lord: it is an amazing level of abundance, a mighty stretch of harvest fields. I have now crossed the great plain for myself, but not without persevering, and, I will add, pleasurable, toil.

This great Psalm is a book in itself: instead of being one among many psalms, it is worthy to be set forth by itself as a poem of surpassing excellence. Those who have never studied it may pronounce it commonplace, and complain of its repetitions; but to the thoughtful student it is like the great deep, full, so as never to be measured; and varied, so as never to weary the eye. Its depth is as great as its length."

Do you see how he struggled with the task of studying and writing about Psalm 119? He was bewildered and dismayed by its size, which he compares to a boundless prairie, an unbroken expanse, a great sea.

But for the lover of God who is eager to learn as much as you can about God from the Word of God, Psalm 119 is "the main ocean" of the Psalms, "a continent of sacred thought", a fertile garden that is ready to be harvested in your heart and mind, if you would but avail yourself of the Spirit's enlightening power and make the effort to reap the benefits of time spent in this chapter.

So I pray that the length of Psalm 119 will not drive you away, but rather may it draw you like a magnet into the all-satisfying presence of God!

Let's dive in and dig in , shall we?

# HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM THIS BOOK AND THIS PSALM

Here are my suggestions for how to get the most out of my little book as well as the ocean of Psalm 119.

## **1. Read Psalm 119.**

Wow - how's that for a mind-blowing, eye-opening, earth-shattering insight?

Yes, that is the first thing you must do. Read Psalm 119. That's it.

But there's more.

I'm going to urge and strongly encourage you to read this psalm in its entirety, in one sitting.

I realize this may cause you to read the Bible for a longer period of time than ever before. But I am confident that this will not be boring. I predict that if you humbly ask the Lord Jesus Christ to enable you to do this for his glory and your sanctification, you will find this to be a delightful experience.

Go ahead and do it, and do it right now! Pray first, then dive in :)

Don't take any notes. Don't linger on any one verse for very long. Do not read the notes in your study Bible. Just read Psalm 119, all 176 verses, in your favorite Bible version.

And you will be blessed!

## **2. Read it again, more slowly this time.**

In fact, I'm going to suggest that you take the next 22 days to read Psalm 119. For the next 22 days, read one eight-verse stanza.

Also, I'd like you to start a journal and write down the following each day:

(1) Of the eight verses, which one is your favorite? Write out the verse by hand.

(2) Then write down why you like that verse. Why did you pick it? What is it about this verse that caused you to choose it over the other seven? Be specific and explain why this verse speaks to you so much. What do you like about it? What does it teach you about God and/or his Word?

You may find it difficult to pick only one verse. Great! If you like two or three verses, you can write down each one and answer the questions about each one. Go for it!

(3) Now write out a prayer that expresses thanksgiving to God for what he just taught you, or perhaps you'll want to ask for help to put that verse's teaching into practice in a particular way.

If you are new to Bible reading, this will be a wonderful way to get intimately acquainted with the treasure chest of truth to be found in God's Word. Reading Psalm 119 will stimulate your hunger for God as you interact and meditate and think and write and pray.

And if you've been reading the Bible for years and are eager to take your love for God and his Word to a new level, this exercise will draw you closer to the One whose love for you is unending, and whose truth is inexhaustible.

Of course, you can use a paper notebook for this journal. Or you can purchase the *Sweeter Than Honey, More Precious Than Gold WORKBOOK*, which is available on Amazon.com: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/1532910053>

The *Workbook* is printed on 8.5 x 11 paper and provides ample space for you to record your thoughts on each stanza of Psalm 119 as explained above – your favorite verse, why you like it, and a personal prayer.

As a bonus, the *Workbook* also includes excerpts from Charles Spurgeon's classic commentary on Psalm 119, *The Treasury of David*.

3. As you journal your way through Psalm 119, read each of the 22 chapters in my little book that correspond to the stanzas of Psalm 119.

I've written a short article on each of the 22 stanzas. You'll be reading my thoughts as I journaled my way through Psalm 119. Some of the chapters are thoughts I jotted down and then expanded at a later time. Some of the articles are the result of more serious study I've done on one verse or on a particular theme that runs through Psalm 119.

These 22 chapters are my selective thoughts on each stanza, so you can look over my shoulder and see what God has taught me through this psalm.

I've also included one of my prayers at the end of each chapter, also taken from my journal. Sometimes the prayer relates directly to the verse(s) discussed in the essay, sometimes not.

OK. That's it. Those are my suggestions. It's not rocket science. It's not difficult. But it is, potentially, a life-changing experience that will bring you to your knees in worship of the One who wrote this psalm and this Book. It's you spending time in the Word of God so you can know, love, and obey the God of the Word -- by the grace of the Father, for the glory of the Son, and by the power of the Spirit.

Or perhaps you'd prefer to simply read my 22 articles like you'd read any other book, from start to finish. That's OK, too! 😊

# 1. WHAT IS YOUR MOTIVE FOR READING THE BIBLE?

STANZA 1 - PSALM 119:1-8

PSALM 119:2

For many Christians, reading the Bible is critical. We call it our "Quiet Time" and we go to great lengths to make sure we have it. We want to read, study and meditate on the Word, for it is our daily bread. Did not Jesus himself say that "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God"? (Matthew 4:4).

There is a danger to avoid, however, when we read the Bible -- treating Bible time as an end in itself rather than the longing of a seeking heart to experience and enjoy intimacy with God.

Psalm 119:2 speaks to this issue - "Blessed are those who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart".

And so we must regularly examine ourselves and our motives. I'm writing this to challenge you and me to ask ourselves the question, "Why do I read the Bible? Do I read the Bible merely to acquire knowledge that becomes a badge of pride, a way to impress my Christian friends, a means to receive praise from others?"

If that is the case, Bible time has little to do with seeking God. Rather, it has everything to do with me - my self-seeking, self-absorbed agenda of pleasing others so I can be viewed as spiritually mature, when in fact I may be anything but that.

If this is an area you struggle with, I'd like to encourage you to spend time in prayer about it. Confess the sin of Bible knowledge as an end in itself and ask God to instill in you a greater desire to spend time in the Word because you want to spend time with him.

Focus on the fact that being a Christian is first and foremost an intimate relationship with your Maker. And this relationship, like any good relationship, is characterized by communication between two people - you and your God. This communication must be a two-way street. We communicate to God through prayer, and he communicates to us through the Bible.

God wants to speak to us through his Word. When we read the Bible, we have the wonderful privilege of hearing what he has to say. And when we listen, with a humble heart and an open mind, there is a communion that takes place that satisfies the soul and brings us into the very presence of King Jesus.

Oh that this would be the cry of our hearts every time we open the Word and read it: "I seek you with all my heart . . . Turn my heart toward your statutes and not toward selfish gain" (Psalm 119: 10, 36).

PRAYER (in response to Psalm 119:2)

Dear God - Thank you for making known your will for my life in your Word. Thank you that your Word is clear. Now please help me to do your will. Please give me a heart that seeks you and strives to obey you.



## 2. WHY OBEYING THE BIBLE IS BETTER THAN WINNING THE LOTTERY

STANZA 2 - PSALM 119:9-16

PSALM 119:14

The psalmist makes an amazing statement in Psalm 119:14 - "I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches".

He is talking about the joy of obeying the will of God as revealed in the Word of God. One of the many benefits of Christian living is joy. Obeying God should result in a life of joy.

There is a cause-and-effect relationship between obedience and joy. Jesus talked about this in John 15:10-11. "If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete."

God wants us to experience great joy in this life - the joy of Jesus himself! Note that Jesus told the disciples that keeping his commands would result in the abiding presence of God's love, "so that my joy may be in you".

Do you think Jesus is a joyful person? Consider this - what kind of joy does Jesus have? Perfect joy! Incredible, powerful, indestructible, divine joy.

And he wants us to have that same joy. What a promise!

The psalmist describes the joy of following God's Word in the second half of Psalm 119:14. This joy is compared to the joy of "great riches".

Have you experienced the joy of great riches? You may not consider yourself to be "rich". But perhaps you got a promotion at work and a pay increase along with it. Or your company had a good year and you received a year-end bonus.

Do you remember the feelings you had? You were excited and joyful, right?

In the U.S., do we not see the joy of great riches when someone wins the lottery and is presented with a check for some obscene amount of money? There's lots of hoopla and a press conference and everyone wants to know, "What will you do with all that money?"

How do you think you would feel if you won 100 million dollars? Do you think you'd have some joy? And so the psalmist is saying that this is what the Christian life can be like. We can experience great joy by simply obeying the Word of God.

He's making a comparison here. So it's good to note that the joy of obedience is similar to the joy of great riches. And it is also different. Consider this . . .

The joy of obedience is infinitely better than the joy of great riches. The joy of money is temporary. The joy of money is easily lost. I can take all my money, invest it in the stock market, and see its value decline by 10% or 25% or 50% literally overnight. Or I can invest in some foolish Ponzi scheme and lose it all.

In contrast, the joy of Jesus is permanent. It lasts forever. It is eternal joy! And it is not dependent on circumstances. Rather, it is based on the never-changing, always trustworthy character of God. Nothing can take this joy away from us because this joy is a gift from the hand of God. And so those who know the joy of knowing and obeying King Jesus can say, "The law from your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold" (Psalm 119:72).

The joy of Jesus is based on the promise of God. But like many promises in Scripture, this is a conditional promise. We will only experience the joy of Jesus when we are living a life of obedience to his Word.

Do you know this joy? If so, I urge you to spend time today saying "Thank You" to Almighty God for his merciful outpouring of this joy on undeserving sinners like you and me. And you'll have even more joy - the joy of praise and thanksgiving.

PRAYER (in response to Psalm 119:14)

Lord, I pray that obeying you would be the source of much joy in my heart. Help me to find my joy in you and your Word.

# 3. WHAT IS SO WONDERFUL ABOUT READING THE BIBLE?

STANZA 3 - PSALM 119:17-24

PSALM 119:18

Have you ever prayed this prayer?

"Open my eyes that I may see  
Wonderful things in your law."

This prayer was written about 3,000 years ago. You can find it in Psalm 119:18. It's a request to understand and experience wonderful things by reading the Bible.

The psalmist expected to see something wonderful by reading God's Word, which he calls "law" or "instruction". The Bible is a book of instruction - it teaches us many things about God and ourselves and our world.

When you read the Bible, do you experience something wonderful? What should we be seeing in the Bible that is so wonderful? Here are 3 places to start:

## **1. God the Father.**

God is the main subject of the Bible. He is revealed in the pages of Scripture in all his glory - who he is, what he is like, what he has done, and what he promises to do in the future for you and me. From Genesis to Revelation, if you are looking for God, you'll find him there. He wants you to know him and has gone to great lengths in his Word to tell you about himself.

## **2. God the Son.**

God has revealed himself most clearly and magnificently through his Son Jesus, who is the "radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being" (Hebrews 1:3). God is the ultimate communicator, and he came up with the most mind-boggling way to unveil himself to us - by becoming a man.

Go to the New Testament and read the four books written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John for a detailed account of the birth, life, miracles, and teachings of Jesus, culminating with his death, resurrection, and ascension. Then read the letters of Paul, Peter, James, and John to understand the meaning of it all. Next, dive into Revelation, the last book of the Bible, to read what happens when Jesus returns a second time to bring this world to an end and to usher in his eternal kingdom.

## **3. God the Holy Spirit.**

Before he returned to heaven, Jesus promised to send his Spirit to be our Counselor and Comforter. And sure enough, that's what happened! Go to the book of Acts to read about the coming of the Holy Spirit and how he transformed a small group of Christ-followers into a dynamic band of Spirit-filled believers who "turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6).

Does the Bible contain wonderful things? Yes! God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are to be found on every page - what could be more wonderful than that?

Bible reading tip - When you read any part of the Bible, always ask yourself this question: What does this passage teach me about God?

PRAYER (in response to Psalm 119:18)

Oh God, I pray that I would experience the wonder, the delight, and the joy of your Word. I want to be like the man who wrote this psalm!

## 4. TOP 10 THINGS TO DO WITH YOUR HEART

STANZA 4 - PSALM 119:25-32

PSALM 119:30

The Bible is a long book. My 1978 New International Version is 1,156 pages long. Ever wonder what the main point of the Bible is? Whether you've ever read the whole thing or not, would you like to know one of its central teachings?

One day an Old Testament scholar asked Jesus to tell him the most important commandment in the Bible. For Jesus, this was an easy question to answer. He cut right to the chase with this response: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment" (Matthew 22:37-38).

The Bible is crystal clear about this - the most important thing I'm supposed to do is love God with everything I am.

But I need help. I need direction. I want to know what loving God with all my heart looks like.

What I'm asking is: How do you do that? How do you love God with all your heart, soul, and mind?

Is there a passage in the Bible that tells us what it means to love God completely?

I think there is! I think Psalm 119 helps us answer this question. And wouldn't you like to know not just what we're supposed to be doing on earth, but how we're supposed to do it?

Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible (176 verses), and virtually every verse is about the Bible. But it's also a wonderful treatise on the heart because the word "heart" appears about 15 times.

So here are ten ways you can love God with your heart, in the order they appear in Psalm 119:

1. Seek God with all your heart (Psalm 119:2, 10, 58)
2. Praise God with an upright heart (Psalm 119:7)
3. Hide God's word in your heart (Psalm 119:11)
- 4. Set your heart on God's laws (Psalm 119:30)**
5. Allow God to set your heart free (Psalm 119:32)
6. Obey God's law with all your heart (Psalm 119:34)
7. Keep God's precepts with all your heart (Psalm 119:69, 112)
8. Allow the Word of God to be the joy of your heart (Psalm 119:111)
9. Call to God with all your heart (Psalm 119:145)
10. Let your heart tremble at God's word (Psalm 119:161)

What do you think? Does that help? It sure helps me. Over the next ten days, why not spend each day focusing on one of these ten specific ways to love God with your heart. This is what the Christian life is all about. This is what the Christian life should look like.

How are you doing? Like me, there's room for improvement, right?

As you work on these ten areas, keep in mind this powerful and comforting promise - "it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Philippians 2:13).



PRAYER (in response to Psalm 119:30)

Oh Lord, please enable me to live your way, the way of faithfulness. And please keep my heart focused on your Word every day.

## 5. THREE GREAT PRAYERS TO PRAY WHEN READING THE BIBLE

STANZA 5 - PSALM 119:33-40

PSALM 119:33

When you read the Bible, it's always a good idea to pray - before, during, and after you open the Word of God. The Bible is a supernatural book and you'll need supernatural help to read it and understand it.

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce you to how to pray biblically while reading the Bible. Specifically, what should you pray about? To answer that question, we turn to Psalm 119, the passage of Scripture most devoted to Scripture, since almost every one of its 176 verses is about the Bible.

The psalmist includes many prayers in Psalm 119. Here are 3 great prayers to pray while reading the Bible. They are short and simple, but don't let their brevity fool you - they are powerful and effective.

### **1. Thank you.**

Some of the best prayers you can pray are the shortest. There are only two words in this prayer, but isn't this a great way to start your conversation with God?

Of course, you should always let God know what it is you are thanking him for, and that is what the psalmist does in Psalm 119:62 - "At midnight I rise to give you thanks for your righteous laws."

He is thanking God for his Word. Why not make this prayer a daily habit, for every day is a day of Thanksgiving for the Christian. We have so much for which to be thankful, and should not the Bible be at or near the top of that list?

## **2. Teach me.**

Here's yet another two-word prayer. And it's the most common prayer of Psalm 119, for it appears 10 times in this chapter! (Check out verses 12, 26, 29, 33, 64, 66, 68, 108, 124, 135.) Isn't that amazing?

The psalmist comes to God with an attitude of humility and dependence. He wants God to instruct him. This is how we come to God, with faith in his ability to provide the guidance and direction we need to live a life pleasing to him.

And he wants to be taught the Word of God - seven times he says "teach me your decrees." Two times he says "teach me your law." And on one occasion he says "teach me knowledge and good judgment."

## **3. Give me understanding.**

The third prayer is only three words. Again, a good prayer need not be long!

This prayer is similar to the "teach me" prayer, as the psalmist repeatedly wants God to be the source of his ability to understand what he reads in the Word.

The psalmist likes this prayer almost as much as the "teach me" prayer. Four times he prays, "Give me understanding" (verses 34, 73, 144, 169). And verse 27 says, "Cause me to understand the way of your precepts." Note also verse 125, "Give me discernment that I may understand your statutes."

One final comment about the "give me understanding" prayer - in verse 34, note how the psalmist wants understanding for a specific purpose. "Give me understanding, so that I may keep your law and obey it with all my heart".

He doesn't ask for understanding for the sake of understanding. Comprehension is never an end in itself. Rather, he seeks to understand the Bible so that he can obey it.

My Christian friend, may this be how we approach God when we read the Bible. Let these three prayers be the cry of your heart as you spend time with him in the Word.

PRAYER (in response to Psalm 119:34)

Dear God, please give me a heart that wants to obey you. Today I want to live your Word and not merely understand it.

## 6. WHY EVERY DAY IS INDEPENDENCE DAY FOR THE CHRISTIAN

STANZA 6 - PSALM 119:41-48

PSALM 119:45

Another 4th of July has come and gone, and I'm still thinking about freedom. For the Christian, every day is Independence Day when you read a verse like Psalm 119:45 --

"I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts".

We treasure our freedom, do we not? In the USA, we sing proudly before every sporting event that we live in "the land of the free and the home of the brave".

I'm thankful for the frequent reminders that freedom is not free; it comes at a great price. The freedom we enjoy in this country is the result of much blood, sweat, and tears.

The psalmist speaks of his life as a life of freedom. Literally, the first half of Psalm 119:4 can be translated, "I shall walk in a wide place" (English Standard Version). Isn't that a wonderful way to describe the meaning of liberty?

What I find most compelling about this verse is the relationship between the first half and the second half. Note the all-important connecting word -- "for" - which means "because". The psalmist says he lives in freedom, and then he tells us the reason for that freedom. He has freedom because he seeks out the Word of God.

Like our blood-bought freedom as U.S. citizens, the believer's freedom is not free. It too comes at a price. The freedom of the believer is the result of seeking God's truth and finding it in the written Word of God, the Bible.

Once we have sought out and found God's Word, we must spend much time reading it, studying it, meditating on it, understanding it, memorizing it, and obeying it - all by the grace of God, empowered by the Spirit of God.

This is what it takes to experience the life of freedom - God's freedom.

Now let's turn our attention to the question, "Freedom from what?" The answer to this question is found in one of the Bible's major themes - liberation from the slavery of sin.

Jesus described the human condition brilliantly and succinctly: "Everyone who sins is a slave to sin" (John 8:34). That is our plight. We are in bondage to sin, for who can exclude himself from the "everyone" of Christ's indictment?

Because of our sin, we are slaves to the ugly consequences of sin in both this life and the next. The Bible is oh so clear about this: as sinners, the death sentence of hell is hanging over our heads (the ultimate penalty of sin - see Romans 6:23). Before God rescues us from the kingdom of darkness, we stand at the precipice of eternity, with nothing below but the lake of fire.

And we live every day battling temptation on every side. Apart from the grace of God, we are doomed to succumb to the forces of evil that entice us (the pervading power of sin - see Ephesians 2:1-3).

Is there any hope for us to escape the penalty and power of sin?

Yes! This is one of the many reasons that the gospel about Jesus Christ is good news! Freedom from sin is found in Jesus. He came to liberate us from slavery to sin.

Listen to these words, spoken by Jesus himself when he visited his hometown of Nazareth and read Isaiah 61:1-2 in the synagogue --

"He (God) has sent me (Jesus) to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor".  
(Luke 4:18-19).

This was the definitive pronouncement of the Mission Statement of Jesus. He came to set us free from the prison of sin. He came to release us from both its penalty and power.

And he accomplished this mission when he died on the cross, for his death paid the penalty of sin and unleashed God's power into the lives of every person who embraces him as Savior, Lord, and Treasure.

This is the freedom that we enjoy as blood-bought believers in Jesus Christ. And this freedom is found by seeking and finding the Great Liberator as he is revealed in the pages of God's holy Word. May we never stop praising our King for setting us free, for when we know the truth, both written and incarnate, "the truth will set you free" (John 8:32).

PRAYER (in response to Psalm 119:45)

Thank you, Jesus, for giving me freedom from sin! I ask that my thankfulness for freedom from the penalty of sin would

increase and that my experience of freedom from the power of sin would be more frequent and more consistent.



## 7. HAVE BIBLE WILL TRAVEL - HOW TO FOCUS ON GOD WHEN YOU'RE ON THE ROAD

STANZA 7 - PSALM 119:49-56

PSALM 119:54

In Psalm 119:54 the psalmist declares to God "Your decrees are the theme of my song wherever I lodge". The purpose of this article is to explore the meaning of this verse and to challenge us with the question "Is this something I can say about my life?"

To help us determine the meaning of this verse, it is good to compare various Bible versions. The above translation comes from the New International Version (NIV), one of my favorites.

There are several other excellent translations. Here are the ones I like to use, specifically to determine the meaning of particular words and phrases in a passage.

Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my sojourning. (ESV - English Standard Version)

Your statutes are my songs in the house of my pilgrimage. (NASB - New American Standard Version)

Your statutes have been my songs wherever I make my home. (New Revised Standard Version)

Your statutes have been my songs, in the house where I live. World English Bible (World English Bible)

By comparing these five versions, the main point of the verse becomes quite clear: wherever I go, God's Word is on my mind. Even when traveling, I always have a song in my heart, and the songs I sing contain the Word of God.

Is this not a wonderful way to live? This man has a love for God and his Word that we would do well to emulate. No matter where he laid his head at night, he was able to commune with his Maker by singing songs to and about God.

When we travel, it can be difficult if not impossible to maintain our daily routine. Perhaps you have a specific time devoted to prayer and Bible reading. For many, this "Quiet Time" is first thing in the morning. For others, it is immediately before going to sleep at night. And many Christians treasure this time, and rightly so.

Then we take a business trip or go on vacation and our normal schedule is turned upside down. How can we spend time with our Lord in such circumstances?

Psalm 119:54 offers a wonderful solution - we sing songs about God! There are so many great hymns, and Bible-based hymns are a wonderful way to fill our minds with the Word when we cannot take out our Bibles and read.

The other great thing about singing is that it can be a prayer. Worship songs are directed to the One who is the object of our praise. We can give thanks for his many blessings and rejoice in all he has done for us through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Does this verse describe you? If so, you have learned one way to live out Psalm 1:2 - "his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night."

One final note - you need not own a stack of Bibles to perform the Bible version comparison described above. Just go to [www.BibleGateway.com](http://www.BibleGateway.com) and you can look up any Bible verse in a multitude of translations. Give it a try today!

PRAYER (in response to Psalm 119:54)

Lord, I pray for a mind that turns to you repeatedly throughout the day. I want your truth to be on my mind continually.

## 8. WHAT YOU CAN LEARN ABOUT GOD BY ASKING ONE SIMPLE QUESTION

STANZA 8 - PSALM 119:57-64

PSALM 119:57,58,62,64

Psalm 119 is a treasure chest of truth for the earnest Bible reader willing to search for it. God has revealed himself in his Word and the longest chapter in the Bible teaches us much about the character of God.

When reading any passage of Scripture, you can learn much by simply asking questions of the text. The first question to ask is, "What does this passage teach me about God (Father, Son, or Holy Spirit)?"

Today I read and meditated on Psalm 119:57-64 and found four verses in this passage that taught me something wonderful about God.

### **God is righteous (Psalm 119:62)**

"At midnight I rise to give you thanks for your righteous laws". Isn't this amazing? The psalmist was so thankful for God's Word that he would get up at midnight to thank him for it! Note that he is thankful for God's "righteous laws".

The laws of God are righteous because God is righteous. He always does the right thing. He is morally pure. God is the only perfect being in the universe, and his Word is a wonderful reflection of that perfection, causing David to sing, "the words of the Lord are flawless, like silver refined in a furnace of clay, purified seven times" (Psalm 12:6).

### **God is gracious (Psalm 119:58)**

God is holy and righteous, but we are not. Scripture repeatedly teaches the utter depravity of humanity. We are sinners - we daily commit acts of unrighteousness because we are by nature unrighteous. We have broken God's law and stand before him as a guilty criminal before the Judge, deserving of punishment, the sentence of death (both physical and eternal) hanging over our heads.

But God is not only righteous, he is also gracious! He is so gracious that he has provided a way for us to be rescued from the wrath of God. And so the psalmist can cry out, "Be gracious to me according to your promise."

In the Old Testament, a repentant Jew would offer an animal sacrifice to atone for his sin. Fortunately, this sacrificial system is no longer necessary because God sent his Son Jesus to be the ultimate sacrifice, and his death pays the penalty that we deserve to pay for our sin.

And so God is infinitely gracious, extending unmerited, undeserved favor to us by putting forth Jesus as the perfect sacrifice and thereby satisfying God's justice toward our sin.

### **God is loving (Psalm 119:64)**

Why would God do such a thing? Because he is a loving God. We experience his love every day through the sun and rain that cause the crops to grow so we can have food on our tables. And so the psalmist could say, "The earth is full of your love, O Lord".

But the ultimate expression of God's love is the coming of God the Son into the world as a Man. Jesus was the Father's greatest gift to us and so the best-known verse in Scripture tells us that God loved us by sending Jesus to provide eternal

life instead of eternal death to anyone who believes in him (John 3:16).

### **God is all-satisfying (Psalm 119:57)**

The righteousness, grace, and love of God are mind-boggling truths. For the Christian, they are the reason we gather weekly to worship him corporately. And they are the reason we praise him daily no matter where we are.

And they are the reason the psalmist can say, "You are my portion, O Lord". Having experienced the wonder of who God is and what he has done to save a guilty sinner from hell, we too find our ultimate satisfaction in him.

Seeing the righteousness of God most clearly in the person of Jesus Christ, receiving his grace and love through repentance of sin and faith in him, we now can proclaim, "My soul will be satisfied with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you" (Psalm 63:5).

### **PRAYER (in response to Psalm 119:58)**

Lord, I pray that I can say, "You are my portion" with sincerity and satisfaction. Please come and satisfy my soul as only you can, and may I be satisfied in you. And may obedience be the overflow of that satisfaction.

## 9. DO YOU PRAY THIS PRAYER WHEN READING THE BIBLE?

STANZA 9 - PSALM 119:65-72

PSALM 119:68

Psalm 119, the longest chapter in the Bible, is filled with verses about the Bible. This psalm is also filled with the prayers of a man who has a deep longing to commune with God and live a godly life in accordance with the Word of God.

One particular prayer is repeated seven times: "Teach me your decrees" (see verses 12, 26, 64, 68, 124, 135, 171). Do you pray this prayer when reading the Bible?

Let's take a look at the meaning of this prayer.

The psalmist is communicating his heartfelt desire for God to teach him the Word. ("Decrees" is one of many synonyms for the Bible in Psalm 119.) And the fact that he repeats this prayer so often is an obvious indication that this desire is both sincere and consuming.

Every verse in this psalm was written in the Hebrew poetic style known as "parallelism", which means there are usually two statements that go together. These two statements often complement one another, and this literary structure enables us to dive deeper into the meaning of the prayer to "teach me your decrees".

Here are two truths to learn from the verses that contain this prayer:

### **Being taught by God is closely associated with worship.**

It is significant that verses 64, 68, and 124 all mention something magnificent about the character of God.

Specifically, God's attributes of love and goodness are highlighted immediately before the psalmist asks for God's teaching. "The earth is filled with your love, Lord; teach me your decrees" (verse 64; see also verse 124). "You are good, and what you do is good; teach me your decrees" (verse 68).

Verses 12 and 171 also mention praise of God. "Praise be to you, Lord; teach me your decrees" (verse 12). "May my lips overflow with praise, for you teach me your decrees" (verse 171).

So there is a clear connection between praising God for his greatness and being taught by God. The more we recognize the infinite worth of our Creator, the more we want him to teach us. This is why Christians do things in a particular order during our church services: worship is usually first (singing hymns of praise), followed by teaching (the sermon), followed by more worship (concluding hymns).

Recognizing God for who he is - the all-knowing, all-powerful, all-loving One - stimulates a longing to sit at the feet of King Jesus and let him teach us how to live.

### **Being taught by God is closely associated with self-examination.**

Note verse 26 - "I gave an account of my ways and you answered me; teach me your decrees". God knows everything about us, yet the psalmist realizes his need to tell God what he's been doing and thinking. Undoubtedly this includes confession of sin - being honest with God about our faults and taking responsibility for them in his presence.



And certainly, this also includes pouring out our hearts when we are faced with the struggles of life and asking for help. Fortunately, we can count on God to listen as we share the most intimate details of our lives -- an amazing thing when you consider that the Creator of the universe has promised to listen to us when we cry out to him.

God promises to both listen and answer. He delights to impart his wisdom to us, and the psalmist is confident of just that in verse 26 - "you answered me". God provides the guidance we need, and he does that primarily through his Word; hence the connection between the believer's self-examination and the believer's longing for the teaching of God's Word.

So when we look up - through worship and praise - God will teach us his Word. And when we look within - through self-examination - God will teach us his Word. Let us follow the example of the psalmist and beseech our Father to teach us his decrees every day, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

PRAYER (in response to Psalm 119:72)

Dear God, I pray that I would have the attitude of the psalmist toward your Word. May your Word be more precious to me than all the money in the world. Please instill in me an increasing awareness of how precious your truth is.

# 10. HOW DO YOU DESCRIBE GOD?

STANZA 10 - PSALM 119:73-80

PSALM 119:73

I've always wanted to go to the mall and give a one-question survey. Here's the question I would ask: Describe God.

What kinds of answers would you get at your local mall?

What about you? How do you answer that question?

Our answers to this simple question are all over the map, are they not? That is why it is oh so critical that we spend much quality time reading, studying, and meditating on the Bible. This is where we find the only authoritative answer to the question, "Who is God and what is he like?"

And this is why a great question to ask when reading any portion of Scripture is this: What does this passage teach me about God (God the Father, God the Son, and/or God the Spirit).

Some portions of the Bible provide more in-depth answers to this question than others, but this is a question you should be asking every time you read the Bible.

I regularly read through the book of Psalms, usually reading a chapter (one psalm) in the morning to start my day. There are 150 psalms, so it takes me about five or six months to read them all. And then I start over and do it again. I've been doing this for the past five years, and I am delighted to tell you how the cultivation of this habit has changed my life and taught me a boatload of truth about the God of the Bible.

But there is one psalm that I prefer to read over an extended timeframe -- Psalm 119.

I usually take 22 days to read through Psalm 119. Such a huge feast should be eaten in smaller bites! I read one eight-verse stanza each day for 22 days, and I like to keep a journal to record my thoughts. Nothing fancy here - just a spiral notebook with my chicken scratch all over it. I'll write down the date and Scripture reference at the top of the page, and then I'll look for one particular verse that "jumps off" the page and into my heart. I record why I like that verse and what I think that verse means, or what I need to do to live out that verse in my life. And then I'll write out a prayer based on the verse, pouring out my heart as I ask God to change me to be more like Jesus by doing, thinking, or saying what I just read about.

It's a journal. It's whatever happens to come into my pea-sized brain when reading the Bible that day.

When reading the psalms, I tend to focus on the verses that talk about God - his character and attributes, his actions and purposes, his kingdom and reign. And there are many of them!

For example, on June 18, 2013, I read Psalm 119:73-80. Here's an excerpt from my journal. It's an answer to the question, "What does this passage teach me about God?"

He is my Creator (v. 73a)

He is righteous because his laws are righteous (v. 75a)

He is faithful even when he afflicts me (v. 75b)

His love never fails (v. 76a)

He is the source of comfort (v. 76a)

He is the God of promises (v. 76b)

He is compassionate (v. 77a)

He is the source of delight because his law is my delight (v. 77b)

I probably spent about 15 or 20 minutes reading these 8 verses and writing down these statements about the character of God. And I loved every second of it!

We serve a great God. And this God has revealed himself in Scripture with great clarity. This creative, righteous, faithful, loving, comfort-giving, promise-keeping, compassionate, delightful God is the only true God. He made us for himself. And he sent his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to earth 2,000 years ago to demonstrate his breathtaking character in all its glory.

He has done all that for us, even though we have often rejected him and turned our backs on him.

In light of that, isn't it a privilege to make the prayers of this stanza our own? "Give me understanding to learn your commands . . . May I wholeheartedly follow your decrees" (Psalm 119:73b and 80a). After meditating on the awesome attributes of our God, we can't help but express our desire to sit at his feet and experience the pure joy of his instruction and presence, and then to stand and willingly, lovingly obey him all the days of our life.

PRAYER (in response to Psalm 119:74)

Lord, am I the cause of joy in other believers? Do my Christian friends rejoice when they see me because of my faith in you? I pray for that to be so.

# 11. HOW TO REMAIN FAITHFUL IN THE MIDST OF PERSECUTION

STANZA 11 - PSALM 119:81-88

PSALM 119:83

Most psalms include the author's name. So I find it intriguing that no mention is made of the author of Psalm 119, even though this is the longest psalm and the longest chapter in the Bible.

So we can only speculate about the author of this psalm and David's name is usually at the top of the list. The internal evidence for his authorship reaches a climax in Psalm 119:81-88, for in this stanza the writer shares much about his circumstances at the time.

Whoever wrote this psalm was experiencing great difficulty at the hands of evil men. He was persecuted unjustly and came close to being killed for no good reason. He was hunted like a criminal yet had done nothing to deserve such treatment. The stress of these turbulent times had worn him out and he was in a state of physical and mental exhaustion - "I am like a wineskin in the smoke" (v. 83).

Through it all, however, he never lost his faith in God or his hope in the Word of God. He clung to his God with unshakeable perseverance. He cried out for help and longed for God to save him and punish his enemies. "When will you punish my persecutors?" (v. 84) "They have almost wiped me from the earth, but I have not forsaken your precepts" (v. 87)

Certainly, David experienced times like these, especially early in his life when he was the innocent victim of King Saul's

erratic outbursts of violent jealousy. (See 1 Samuel 16-27 for the details.)

Regardless of who wrote this psalm, verses 81-88 are unique in that all eight verses of this stanza contain a unique combination of the author's frustration and faith during a crisis over which he had no control.

And so we are given a stellar example of grace under fire. We have much to learn from this man's example of faithfulness, for all believers have been promised a life of persecution. Paul wrote, "everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Timothy 3:12). Jesus told the disciples, "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first" (John 15:18).

Of course, the nature and degree of anti-Christian hostility vary greatly around the world. Christians in western nations face much less persecution than Christians in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

But the opposition will be there, and we can count on it. We would do well to trust in the unfailing love of God amid tribulation, continuing to "put my hope in your word" (v. 81) regardless of our circumstances. This is easier said than done, and I admit that as a U.S. Christian I have little experience with the type of persecution that our brothers and sisters are going through on the other side of the world.

So we pray for the persecuted church, thanking God for organizations like Voice of the Martyrs, who keep us informed and provide opportunities for us to support those in need.

We are compelled to ask the question, "How do they remain faithful?" How do persecuted believers stay the course when

the temptation to jump ship grows stronger every day? How did the author of Psalm 119 continue to trust God no matter what?

I think these eight verses hold the key. Note how the psalmist is locked in on the character of God and the Word of God. Every verse in this stanza mentions something about God and/or his truth. While running for his life, he is keenly aware of who God is. He spends much time meditating on the attributes of God and the fact that his God is the source of salvation, hope, comfort, and justice because God is trustworthy, helpful, life-giving, and loving.

This passage teaches us that strong faith is the result of a mind saturated with the Word. "Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). There is a cause-and-effect relationship between spending time in the Word and strengthening our faith. This is how any believer in any age can persevere in any crisis.

For more information about the persecuted church, visit [www.persecution.com](http://www.persecution.com)

PRAYER (in response to Psalm 119:83)

Lord, my physical discomforts seem difficult at times, but they are quite minor when compared to the suffering of the persecuted church. Help me to stay focused on you and your spiritual blessings, for they far outweigh any pain I have.

## 12. HOW TO FIND HOPE IN ANY SITUATION

STANZA 12 - PSALM 119:89-96

PSALM 119:89

I'd like to give you a simple Bible quiz. I'm going to give you a list of adjectives (descriptive words), and you tell me who I'm describing, OK?

Here's the list: righteous, wonderful, true, good, trustworthy, precious, eternal, enduring, boundless, omnipresent, and sweet.

Who am I describing? If you said, "God", or more specifically, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, then you and I are on the same page.

But here's something amazing. In Psalm 119, every one of the adjectives listed above is used to describe the Word of God.

Go ahead and take out your Bible and see for yourself. Here's the list again, along with the verses in which you'll find these adjectives used in reference to God's Word: righteous (7), wonderful (18), true (30), good (39), trustworthy (42), precious (72), eternal (89), enduring (91), boundless (96), omnipresent (98), and sweet (103).

Now, here's another simple Bible quiz. Who is the source of the following things: life, strength, grace, freedom, delight, wisdom, insight, understanding, light, joy, hope, and peace?

Again, Jesus Christ is the answer to that question. But again, in Psalm 119, the Word of God is described as the source of



life (25), strength (28), grace (29), freedom (45), delight (92), wisdom (98), insight (99), understanding (100), light (105), joy (111), hope (147) and peace (165).

I find this relationship between God and his Word quite an eye-opener. God and his Word are so closely related, they are described with identical terminology.

Consider this example. Moses wrote, "from everlasting to everlasting you are God" (Psalm 90:2). God is eternal. He has no beginning and no end. He has always existed and always will exist. He is eternally self-existent. That is a truth guaranteed to blow your mind and fill your heart with praise, worship, and adoration of the One who told Moses at the burning bush, "I am who I am" (Exodus 3:14).

So the eternity of God is one of the foundational teachings of Scripture. And so is the eternity of the Word of God, as the writer of Psalm 119 states: "Your word, Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens" (Psalm 119:89).

This inseparable relationship between God and his Word is not just an exercise in semantics. This is reason to be greatly encouraged, for when faced with the struggles and challenges of life, it is easy to become discouraged and distraught, and to wonder whether God is still in control and will, in the end, work all things "for the good of those who love him" (Romans 8:28).

When you are faced with the loss of a job or a loved one, or when a terrible accident or a terminal illness strikes your family, what do you do to remind yourself that God remains the Rock and Refuge of your life? We open his Word and let him speak words of comfort and hope, words of strength and joy in the midst of our sorrow.

From Genesis to Revelation, our God provides hope through "the encouragement of the Scriptures" (Romans 15:4). May this be how each of us responds to the trials of life -- by going to Jesus, the living Word, and to the Bible, the written Word, to find grace in our time of need.

PRAYER (in response to Psalm 119:89)

Lord, thank you for your eternity and your faithfulness!  
This is the foundation of your being - you can be trusted to be with me today because you have always existed.

# 13. HOW TO MEDITATE ON THE BIBLE ALL DAY LONG

STANZA 13 - PSALM 119:97-104

PSALM 119:97

In Psalm 119:97 we read a most amazing statement. "Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long."

The psalmist has a passion for God's truth. He is so enthralled by God's Word that he thinks about it constantly. For this writer, pondering the Word of God has become a habit.

Please consider that the psalmist makes this claim to meditate on Scripture eight times in Psalm 119. He meditates on God's precepts (v. 15 and 78), decrees (v. 23 and 48), deeds (v. 27), law (v. 97), statutes (v. 99), and promises (v. 148) - each of these nouns is a synonym for God's Word or "law," his written instruction which we find today in the Holy Bible.

What does it mean to meditate on the law? To meditate means to think about, ponder, reflect on, contemplate. The idea is to focus one's mind on God's truth and to remain fixated on it for a period of time. It is an active, purposeful, intentional use of the mind, not an emptying of the mind. It is to think about what God is saying to us on the pages of Scripture.

To mediate about anything is a lost art, is it not? We can get so busy with life, can't we? Whether you are working a full-time job or spending your days raising children, who has time to just sit and think about anything but the task at hand?

So I'm confounded by this writer's confession that "I meditate on it all day long". How did he do that? Who has the time to spend all day thinking about the Bible? Did this man withdraw from society and live in a cave or a monastery?

Well, we don't know who wrote Psalm 119. The author's name is not provided in the heading, as is the case for many of the psalms. But we do know that whoever wrote this psalm was suffering much (v. 107) at the hands of his enemies (v. 157), who also happened to be those in authority over him (v. 23, 161). He was being persecuted unjustly (v. 86) by arrogant, wicked men (v. 61, 69, 110) and so repeatedly pleads with God to deliver him from imminent death and preserve his life (v. 153, 154).

That doesn't sound like a guy who had nothing else to do but read his Bible all day, does it?

Here's a verse that might unlock the key to this man's obsession with Scripture. "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you" (Psalm 119:11). The English Standard Version translates this as, "I have stored up your word in my heart"; and The Message also captures the meaning quite well, "I've banked your promises in the vault of my heart".

This man spent much time literally running for his life. Yet he was able to meditate on God's Word in the most stressful situations because he had memorized it. He could think about it all day long because it was buried deep in his heart and always just a thought away.

When was the last time you memorized Scripture? It doesn't take much time to memorize a verse or two, or a treasured passage. And then, once you've done that, it is right there whenever you want to think about it.

I like to use old business cards or index cards and write a verse on them. Then I stick that little piece of paper in my pocket and carry it with me. I'll pull it out while I'm waiting in line at the store or stuck in traffic or walking from the car to the office, or whenever I have a few moments of idle time. And within a day or two, that verse becomes part of me. And through that simple exercise of meditating on a verse throughout the day by memorizing it, I have allowed the Creator of the universe to speak to me and fill my mind with his truth - all day long!

What do you say? Will you give this a try? I guarantee that you won't be disappointed, for God loves to bless his people when they spend quality time with him in his Word.

PRAYER (in response to Psalm 119:97)

Lord, help me to stay focused on you today by meditating on your Word all day long. Thank you for giving me the desire to think about you and your truth. Please keep me on this path and increase the amount of time I turn to you each day.

## 14. WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU WHEN YOU READ THE BIBLE?

STANZA 14 - PSALM 119:105-112

PSALM 119:111

I'd like you to think about what happens to you when you read the Bible. What words would you use to describe this experience, most of the time? Think about it for a few minutes and jot down your thoughts. I'll wait right here while you do that :)

Did you write down your answer? Great!

Now let's see how the writer of Psalm 119 describes his time in the Word.

"Your statutes . . . are the joy of my heart" (Psalm 119:111). "I rejoice in your promise like one who finds great spoil" (Psalm 119:162). "I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches" (Psalm 119:14). The psalmist finds much joy in God's word. He rejoices in the Word, and he rejoices in obeying the Word.

How about you? When you read and obey the Bible, do you experience joy in your heart? Does God give you joy because you spend time with him while meditating on his truth?

Finding joy in God is a prominent theme throughout Scripture, especially the Psalms. Have you ever done a word study on "joy"? After you finish this article, I urge you to get out your concordance or head over to [BibleGateway.com](http://BibleGateway.com) and look up all the verses in the Psalms containing the words

"joy", "rejoice", "rejoices", and "rejoicing". It will be time well spent, I assure you!

In Psalm 119, there is another word the writer uses often to describe his relationship to Scripture, a word that is similar to "joy" and "rejoice." It is "delight."

"I delight in your law" (Psalm 119:70) is a statement he makes three times (see also v. 16 and v. 47). And "Your law is my delight" (Psalm 119:77) is an expression found six times (see v. 24, 35, 92, 143, and 174). So I also encourage you to do a word study on "delight" and "delights" in the Psalms.

When was the last time you said about anything, "That was a delight!" or "That was a joy!" It might have been a delicious meal or a long walk or a sunny 72-degree day with low humidity. As I think about my life, I realize how often I am blessed with a joyful or delightful experience, yet I rarely use those particular words to tell others about it, including when I give thanks to God for it.

So I'm writing this to encourage us to expand our "praise vocabulary". When God showers his grace upon us, which he does daily in 1,001 different ways, why not tell him and others, "Thank you, Jesus; that was so delightful and brought much joy to my heart!"

Reality check: when we spend time in the Word, if we rarely come away from the Book with much joy and delight, isn't something amiss?

When you do that word study about "joy" and "delight" in the Psalms, note the frequency of phrases such as "rejoice in God" and "delight in God" (or phrases similar to that). For the Christian, we should find our ultimate joy and delight in God. Not in his gifts, but in him. The difference between the two is semantically subtle yet experientially huge.

And for the writer of Psalm 119, finding joy and delight in Scripture was synonymous with finding joy and delight in God. Throughout the psalm, he describes the Word with adjectives and phrases that apply to God - words like eternal and righteous and true and good.

The psalmist can say that the Word is his source of joy and delight (and life, strength, freedom, wisdom, light, peace, hope, and salvation) because God is the source of all these blessings, and the Word is how God makes known the riches of his grace and the all-satisfying wonder of his presence.

For the Christian who knows the bliss of delighting in God, the relationship between the living Word and the written Word becomes intimately intertwined. And the result is a life of joy that exceeds all expectations and prepares us for eternity.

PRAYER (in response to Psalm 119:105)

Dear Lord, Thank you for your Word and the guidance you give me through it. I need your help today to be the man you want me to be. I ask that what you've taught me in your Word would be my guide and that your Spirit would also provide the strength to obey you joyfully.



# 15. IS FEAR OF GOD NECESSARY?

STANZA 15 - PSALM 119:113-120

PSALM 119:120

Psalm 119:120 says, "My flesh trembles in fear of you; I stand in awe of your laws."

We don't know who wrote Psalm 119. I sure wish we did. Certainly, David is a likely candidate, for the writer of this psalm faced much unjust persecution, and other than Jesus, there is arguably no other person in the Bible who faced as much unfair treatment from humans as David, and that is precisely the way the author of this psalm was treated. We also know much about the writer's attitude toward God and his Word. He loved God and the Word of God with great passion and devotion. Furthermore, as we read in Psalm 119:120, he had much fear of both God and the Word of God.

Unfortunately, we don't hear much about the fear of God these days. When was the last time you heard someone say "My flesh trembles in fear of God" or "I stand in awe of the Bible"?

Yet the Bible has much to say about the fear of God. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7). "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10). I take these verses to mean that if we don't fear God, we are just plain stupid, spiritually speaking. Without the fear of God, we are metaphysically challenged, spiritual illiterates.

So this begs the question, "What does it mean to fear God?" One good definition of "fear" is reverence, respect, and awe. The idea of awe is certainly a good place to start when

defining fear. As indicated in Psalm 119:120, "in fear" and "in awe" are parallel expressions (in the NIV).

But there's more to fear than reverence, respect, and awe. Please note that the psalmist says that he trembles in fear of God. We must be careful not to exclude from fear the idea of being afraid, for this is how the ESV translates the second half of Psalm 119:20 - "I am afraid of your judgments."

You may be wondering, "But why should I be afraid of God? He loves me and has forgiven all my sins and has promised to save me from hell and bring me to heaven someday."

And that is true. God loves us more than we can even imagine. But that doesn't mean we should not still be afraid of him. The psalmist was - we cannot dismiss the plain meaning of the text here - he trembled before God.

This isn't the only way the psalmist related to God. He was quite aware of God's love, grace, compassion, and mercy. He writes about the goodness of God throughout Psalm 119 (see verses 41, 64, 68, 76, 77, 88, 124, 132, 149). But he also trembles.

What I'm saying here is that even for the forgiven Christian, there is a place for fear and trembling. It's not all there is to the Christian life. There's more - oh so much more!

But we must not forget that the loving God who saved us from hell is also the One who sits on a throne, ruling over all, sustaining all. We stand in awe of him because he is awesome. To simply ponder his power and majesty and glory should cause some measure of trembling before him.

This is how believers responded when confronted with the presence of God. From Isaiah and Ezekiel in the Old

Testament to Peter and John in the New Testament, when God chose to reveal himself, people fell down and trembled. (See Isaiah 6:1-8, Ezekiel 1-3, Luke 5:1-11, and Revelation 1:9-20 for details.)

Yes, this is a paradox. In the presence of God, we respond to him with a holy combination of fear and joy - "Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling" (Psalm 2:11).

You likely know what it means to rejoice. Do you also know what it means to tremble? I pray that you do. If not, could it be that you have an unbalanced view of God and need to focus more on his holiness, righteousness, justice, and wrath?

PRAYER (in response to Psalm 119:120)

Oh God, please increase my fear of you and my awe of your Word. May I rejoice with trembling, and may fear of you always be part of my life.

## 16. IS THERE A PLACE FOR HATRED IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE?

STANZA 16 - PSALM 119:121-128

PSALM 119:128

In Psalm 119:127-28 we learn much about the man who wrote the longest chapter in the Bible. He was a man of great passion - he loved the good and hated what is evil. "Because I love your commands more than gold, more than pure gold, and because I consider all your precepts right, I hate every wrong path."

He loved God's Word more than all the money in the world. The psalmist likes to make a comparison between his attitude toward the Word and his attitude toward wealth. "The law from your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold" (Psalm 119:72).

In verses 127 and 128, his love for God's Word and God's righteousness is the basis for his hatred of sin.

Love for the right will inevitably produce hatred for the wrong. They are two sides of the same coin. The New Testament teaches this concept clearly in Romans 12:9, where Paul writes, "Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good".

Perhaps you've not thought of the Christian life in these terms before, but we are instructed to both love and hate. We are instructed to love God and people, as Jesus indicated when asked, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" (Mark 12:28-31). His answer, in a word, was "love" - love for God and love for our neighbor.

And we are also instructed to hate - not people, of course, but sin. And first and foremost, we should be cultivating a hatred of our own sin. Isn't this why Paul said in Romans 8:13, "if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live"?

How do we hate our sin? By putting it to death! So, we could say that the Christian life is characterized by such an intense hatred of one's sin that we will be engaged in a war against our sin (the misdeeds of the body), and this is a battle to the death. We take no prisoners. Our sin is the enemy, and we kill the enemy.

Yes, Christianity is one violent religion. We are commanded to hate and to kill - not people, but our sin. This has been the passion of believers for centuries. It was the passion of the man who wrote Psalm 119. It was the passion of the apostle Paul. And it was something that even Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount. "If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away" (Matthew 5:30).

My Christian friend, what sin are you amputating today? By the Spirit and for the glory of King Jesus, may God empower us to demonstrate our love for him by hating and killing our sin.

PRAYER (in response to Psalm 119:127-128)

Lord, you have taught me that love of righteousness and hatred of sin are two characteristics of the true Christian. Please give me more of both. How I need you to enable me to cultivate both.

# 17. HOW TO BE AMAZED BY PSALM 119

STANZA 17 - PSALM 119:129-136

PSALM 119:129-136

Psalm 119 is a fascinating portion of Scripture for at least two reasons. First and most obviously, it is fascinating simply because it is in the Bible and so comes from the very mind and mouth of God. That is reason enough.

It is also fascinating from a literary standpoint. It is divided into 22 stanzas, each 8 verses long. And every verse of each stanza begins with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

Most modern translations reflect this structure of 22 verses of 8 verses. You'll note the names of the 22 Hebrew letters immediately before verses 1, 9, 17, and so on.

So when we come to stanza 17, which begins with verse 129, it amazes me that even though we don't see this in English, all 8 verses (129 - 136) begin with the 17th letter of the Hebrew alphabet, "pe".

Could you write 8 sentences about the Bible that all begin with the 17th letter of the English alphabet? In case you're wondering, that would be the letter "Q". I'm having trouble just coming up with 8 words that begin with "Q", let alone 8 sentences!

I started reading verses 129 - 136, wondering how I could take these verses and rewrite them in my own words, but starting each sentence with a word that begins with "Q".

Take a look at these - the first sentence is from the NIV; the second sentence (in italics) is my "Q" sentence. Sometimes I was able to create a paraphrase of the actual Bible verse; other times, I went in a different direction.

**V. 129**

Your statutes are wonderful;  
therefore I obey them.

*Quite amazing is your word, O Lord;  
you give us so many good reasons to follow you.*

**V. 130**

The unfolding of your words gives light;  
it gives understanding to the simple.

*Quality teaching comes from your mouth;  
may your Spirit enlighten me whenever I read your law.*

**V. 134**

Redeem me from human oppression,  
that I may obey your precepts.

*Quicken my heart as I meditate on your truth;  
please empower me to obey your commands.*

**V. 135**

Make your face shine on your servant  
and teach me your decrees. (v. 135)

*Quiet my mind as I ponder your laws;  
remove all distractions so I can sit at your feet and learn your ways.*

I came up with four "Q" words that seemed to fit four of the verses in Psalm 119:129-136. And then I started realizing how difficult this is - coming up with 8 words for each letter of the alphabet, and then writing a sentence about the Bible that began with that word - this is no easy task!

Why not do this yourself? Go ahead and give it a try! And you are welcome to send me an email with your writings.

One final suggestion - perhaps it would be easier if your sentences begin with a letter other than "Q", so feel free to tackle this exercise with one of the other stanzas.

PRAYER (in response to Psalm 119:131)

Lord, may I have the longing for your Word described in this verse - like an animal in desperate search for food, may I seek you in the Word.



# 18. A PSALMIST'S OBSESSION: THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

STANZA 18 - PSALM 119:137-144

PSALM 119:137-138

One of the easiest ways to understand a portion of Scripture is to look for repeated words. When the writer refers to something several times within a few verses, he's trying to emphasize that topic. We do that every day in our own conversations, right?

So when we come to Psalm 119:137-144, we see that one particular word is mentioned five or six times (depending on the translation you use). The word is "righteous" and/or "righteousness".

The psalmist wants us to know that God and his Word are righteous.

## **God is righteous.**

This is stated in verse 137. "You are righteous, Lord." God by nature is righteous, which means he is perfectly just in both character and conduct. He always does the right thing. And he has always been righteous, which is the point of verse 143 - "Your righteousness is everlasting" (NIV), which the ESV translates as "Your righteousness is righteous forever".

## **God's Word is righteous.**

The Word of God is righteous because it originates from the righteous One. "The statutes you have laid down are righteous" (v. 138). And just as God is eternally righteous, the same can be said about God's Word - "Your statutes are always righteous" (v. 144).

The relationship between God and his Word is seen throughout Psalm 119, not to mention the rest of Scripture. Many attributes of God are also used to describe the Word of God.

What I find most intriguing is that in Psalm 119 righteousness is mentioned more often than any other attribute of God and his Word - 13 times. The writer was consumed with thoughts about God's righteousness and he comes back to this characteristic over and over again. Take a few minutes and read the following verses to see what I mean: 7, 62, 75, 106, 123, 128, 137, 138, 142, 144, 160, 164, and 172.

The writer has a comprehensive view of God and mentions many of God's attributes throughout the psalm - God and/or his Word are described as wonderful, delightful, gracious, truthful, loving, good, trustworthy, precious, eternal, sweet - on and on we could go.

But why is righteousness foremost in the psalmist's mind? Certainly, his circumstances could be the reason. He was being unfairly persecuted by wicked men -- "the arrogant mock me unmercifully" (v. 51); "the wicked bind me with ropes" (v. 61); "the arrogant have smeared me with lies" (v. 69); "the arrogant dig pits to trap me" (v. 85); "many are the foes who persecute me" (v. 157).

When faced with such unjust treatment, what does a person want more than anything? Justice! This man longs for God to rescue him from his predicament because God is righteous and he promises to make everything right, eventually and ultimately.

Of course, many people have been treated unfairly and have never seen justice in their lifetime. That may have been the

case for the writer of Psalm 119. We don't know who wrote this psalm, nor do we know the outcome of his situation.

But we do know that the Bible speaks of a day when all wrongs will be made right. On Judgment Day, righteousness will prevail.

Perhaps you have been the victim of injustice. If not, someday you will likely know the frustration and despair that we read about in this psalm. Many Christians throughout the world are experiencing such treatment. "In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Timothy 3:12).

The psalmist provides an example of faithfulness during much tribulation. When enduring a season of injustice, may we be able to say, "Trouble and distress have come upon me, but your commands give me delight" (Psalm 119:143).

Isn't this how Jesus Christ responded to his unjust treatment? Let us "consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart" (Hebrews 12:3).

PRAYER (in response Psalm 119:137-138)

Lord, thank you for being righteous and for giving us the Word, which teaches us your righteousness. Please give me a better understanding of your righteousness and how to reflect it and demonstrate it in my life.

# 19. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO OBEY THE WORD?

STANZA 19 - PSALM 119:145-152

PSALM 119:145

"I call with all my heart; answer me, Lord, and I will obey your decrees." So prays the psalmist in Psalm 119:145.

The writer tells us many things about the Word in Psalm 119 - what it is, what God wants to do for us through it, and most importantly, what our response should be to it.

Here's an exercise I encourage you to do today. Read through Psalm 119 and look for the many different ways the psalmist describes his response to the Word. He answers the question, "How should I respond to the Word?" with the following: walk in it, consider it, learn it, live according to it, meditate on it, delight in it, long for it, understand it, choose it, set my heart on it, hold fast to it, trust in it, put my hope in it, seek it, speak of it, love it, remember it, give thanks for it, and believe in it.

And that's just the first half of the psalm!

There is one particular response that appears more often than any other: obey it. One prominent theme in Psalm 119 is obedience to the Word of God. The psalmist mentions it at least 25 times - on average, at least once in every stanza.

Such a dominant theme begs the question, "What does it mean to obey the Word?"

The word "obey", as found in the New International Version, can also be translated "keep", which is usually how the

English Standard Version (ESV) renders it. It's a word that has several related meanings, including:

Take care of. In Genesis 2:15, God put Adam in the garden of Eden "to work it and keep it" (ESV).

Watch over and guard. In Genesis 3:24, after God drove Adam and Eve out of the garden, he put angels and a sword to "guard (or keep) the way to the tree of life" (ESV).

Preserve and protect. In Numbers 6:24, God told Moses that Aaron should use the following words when speaking to the people, "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you".

Observe and perform. In Exodus 12:24-25, on the night of the Exodus from Egypt, Moses told the Jews that God expects them to "observe/obey" (ESV/NIV) and "keep/observe" (ESV/NIV) the Passover celebration when they come into the promised land.

This last meaning, to observe and perform, is the most common meaning of the word "obey", and the one we usually think of first when we encounter either "obey" or "keep" in the Bible. "Love the Lord your God and keep his requirements, his decrees, and his commands always" (Deuteronomy 11:1).

But please note that to obey/keep the Word involves much more than external behavior or adherence to the Ten Commandments. Certainly, this is a critical component, and without it, there is no obedience. But to get the full scope of what God means by "obey", let's not overlook these other aspects - we are to not only "do" the Word, but also take care of it, watch over it, guard it, preserve it, and protect it.

Who is sufficient for such a task? Only by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit can we live up to these expectations.

Furthermore, Psalm 119 gives us much to ponder regarding how we obey the Bible. The result of obedience is external behavior. But Christ-honoring obedience begins in the heart and must be the outward manifestation of genuine love for God.

We obey the Word because we love the Word. "I obey your statutes, for I love them greatly" (Psalm 119:167). And we love the Word because we love God. If our motive for obedience is anything else, then our obedience displeases God and becomes an act of sinful hypocrisy. Note the word order in Deuteronomy 11:1, quoted above. It is no accident that "love" precedes "keep".

Do you see the fine line between obedience and sin? I can do what looks like an act of obedience, yet if my motive is not love for God, have I really obeyed God?

And so we must examine ourselves daily in this regard, and may this be our prayer, "Give me understanding, so that I may keep your law and obey it with all my heart" (Psalm 119:34).

Obedience must be done with the heart and originate from the heart. I take that to mean, at a minimum, that I obey God because I have a sincere desire to please him. I obey him because I truly want to obey him. And this obedience is the expression of a thankful heart. Because he has done so much for me, I want to live in a way that brings much praise, honor, and glory to him.

Is this the cry of your heart? May it be so.

PRAYER (in response to Psalm 119:151)

"Yet you are near, Lord." Lord, help me to remain focused on your presence. Help me to have an increasingly greater awareness of you each day. I pray that you will be my rock, my fortress, and my refuge.

## 20. WHY DOES THE PSALMIST PRAY FOR SALVATION IN PSALM 119?

STANZA 20 - PSALM 119:153-160

PSALM 119:153-154

We don't know who wrote Psalm 119, but we do know much about him because he mentions his circumstances many times. In Psalm 119:153-160 he is especially concerned about his situation, for seven of the eight verses in this stanza make mention of it.

There is one word that best describes the writer's life when he wrote this psalm: suffering. He has suffered much (v. 107), so he pleads with God to "look on my suffering" (v. 153). We also know that his suffering is the result of unjust treatment by ungodly people who are persecuting him. "Many are the foes who persecute me" (v. 157). He has many enemies, and these men are described as "wicked" (v. 155) and "faithless" (v. 158), people who "do not seek out your decrees" (v. 155) and therefore "do not obey your word" (v. 158).

Hasn't this man painted a crystal clear picture of his life?

And so what does he do?

### **He prays for physical salvation.**

Note the repeated prayers to be saved from this situation. He asks God to "deliver me" (v. 153) and to "redeem me" (v. 154). His favorite prayer in this stanza is offered three times - "preserve my life" (v. 154, 156, 159). Isn't it significant that this particular prayer for physical relief is prayed nine times in this psalm (see verses 25, 37, 40, 88, 107, and 149)? Take



note: it could be the most often repeated prayer in Psalm 119.

This man has reason to believe that he could be killed at any moment. He's not sure whether he will wake up in the morning.

Overall, there are at least 20 prayers in this psalm for physical safety - as mentioned above, "preserve my life" occurs 9 times, and there are 11 other prayers that ask for physical salvation (see verses 17, 77, 94, 116, 117, 134, 146, 153, 154, 170 and 175). Simple yet desperate prayers come from the depths of his being. Save me! Sustain me! Uphold me! Redeem me! Deliver me! Let me live!

Do you get the picture?

When I read about salvation in the Bible, I usually think of spiritual salvation. And many passages lead us in that direction in both the Old and the New Testament.

I think of salvation from sin and its ultimate consequences (the wrath of God, death, hell, eternal punishment in the lake of fire). I also think of salvation from the power of sin in my life (overcoming greed, anger, bitterness, etc). But I rarely, if ever, think of being saved physically, because I live in the U.S. and have had a very easy life of comfort and safety in middle-class America.

But I don't think this man is praying for salvation from hell. The many verses describing his circumstances make a strong case that physical salvation is in view here.

Regardless of the outcome, he continues to trust God and obey his Word.

The psalmist makes many statements throughout this chapter regarding his faithfulness to God during these trying circumstances. "I have not forgotten your law" (v. 153). "I have not turned away from your statutes" (v. 157). "See how I love your precepts" (v. 159).

If you read the above three verses without considering his circumstances, you might say he is bragging about himself and is guilty of prideful self-sufficiency. But I don't think that is the case. He is simply stating his case before God - he has done nothing to deserve this unfair treatment and is reminding God of that.

We have much to learn from the writer of Psalm 119, don't we? There are Christians throughout the world facing unjust treatment from those who are violently opposed to Christianity. This man's perseverance in the midst of persecution is an example for the persecuted church.

But what about those of us who may never face this type of persecution? We, too, face trials of many kinds. Physical illness, long painful deaths, and tragic accidents are likely to rear their ugly heads in every Christian home. Jesus said that sun and rain are given to believers and non-believers alike (Matthew 5:45); likewise, calamity is given to all. It comes in many forms and varying degrees, but no one is exempt from suffering, especially the Christian. James reminds us that trials are not a matter of "if" but "when" (see James 1:2 and note the word "whenever").

### **The psalmist has unwavering faith in the sovereignty of God.**

This is one of the most amazing sentences in Psalm 119 - "in faithfulness you have afflicted me" (v. 75b). Hasn't he told us that wicked men are responsible for his suffering? Then how can he say, "God has afflicted me"? How can this be?

There is a paradox here that is found throughout Scripture - the unresolved tension between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. We are held accountable for everything we say, do, and think. And in the end, everything happens as God intended it to happen. This side of heaven, our pea-sized brains will struggle greatly to grasp the wonder of this tension. But it is there and I think we would do well to embrace the mystery.

I am the first to admit that this is a difficult teaching to understand. And it can be even harder to accept. But it is what Scripture says. The psalmist has come to grips with it and stands with other saints in believing that God is ultimately in control of everything, even though we will be held accountable for our actions on Judgment Day.

By faith, Joseph embraced the mystery of this paradox. After being sold into slavery by his brothers, years later he tells them, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives" (Genesis 50:20).

By faith, Job embraced the mystery of this paradox. After hearing that his 10 children were killed in a natural disaster, he says, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised" (Job 1:21). And after being afflicted with boils by the devil, he asks his wife, "Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" (Job 2:10).

And by faith, the writer of Psalm 119 embraced the mystery of this paradox. How about you?

PRAYER (in response to Psalm 119:160)

"All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal."  
Dear God, today I am filled with gratitude for the eternity

and truthfulness of your Word. Thank you for preserving it for centuries!

## 21. DO WE LOVE GOD OR THE WORD OF GOD?

STANZA 21 - PSALM 119:161-168

PSALM 119:163,167

We love to use the word "love", don't we? I love football and pizza and ice cream -- not to mention 1,001 other things that may or may not deserve such a high accolade.

The writer of Psalm 119 is not shy to proclaim what he loves. He loves the Word of God. And he says so -- not once, but ten times in this chapter. He loves God's commands (v. 47, 48, 127), God's law (v. 97, 113, 163), God's statutes (v. 119, 167), God's promises (v. 140), and God's precepts (v. 159).

This man not only loves God's Word, but he is also determined to demonstrate that love by learning it (v. 7), obeying it (v. 8), meditating on it (v. 15), delighting in it (v. 16), longing for it (v. 20), keeping it (v. 22), choosing it (v. 30), holding fast to it (v. 31), following it (v. 33), trusting it (v. 42), putting my hope in it (v. 43), seeking it (v. 45), speaking of it (v. 46), reaching out for it (v. 48), remembering it (v. 52), giving thanks for it (v. 62), and looking for it (v. 82).

Wow! Is this man consumed with the Bible!

And the verbs listed above come from just the first half of Psalm 119 (verses 1-88). There are another 88 verses that contain similar language (verses 89-176)!

What I find intriguing is that everything this writer says about the Word can also be said about God himself. When Jesus was asked, "Of all the commandments, which is the

most important?" (Mark 12:28), what was his answer? Did he say, "Love the Bible with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength"?

No. He said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart" (Mark 12:30).

And what about all the other verbs that are used by the psalmist to describe his devotion to Scripture? Are we not commanded elsewhere in the Bible to learn about God, to obey God, to meditate on God, to delight in God, to long for God, to keep God, to choose God, to hold fast to God, to follow God, to trust God, to put our hope in God, to seek God, to speak of God, to reach out for God, to remember God, to give thanks for God, and to look for God?

It seems to me that the psalmist does not make a distinction between God and his Word. He has the same passion for Scripture that we are supposed to have for God.

If this is true, then this is huge. The psalmist's language tells me that if I want to pursue God with unshakable faith, I do that by pursuing his Word with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength. If I want to find God, I will find him in his Word. If I want to know God, I will know him through his Word. If I want to follow him and obey him, I will do that by following his Word and obeying his Word.

Isn't this why the people of God are known as "the people of the Book"?

Isn't this why Jesus said, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching" (John 14:23)? I believe it is.

PRAYER (in response to Psalm 119:167)

Dear God, I'm reading about a man who loves and obeys your Word. He also trembles at and rejoices in your Word. Please

help me to embrace these attitudes and demonstrate these responses to your Word.

## 22. WHAT DO YOU LONG FOR?

STANZA 22 - PSALM 119:169-176

PSALM 119:174

"I long for your salvation, Lord, and your law gives me delight" (Psalm 119:174).

The psalmist has poured out his heart, perhaps over many years, in the writing of this psalm. Has any writer of Scripture told us so much about himself in one chapter as this man has?

Many things impress me about him. He has a steadfast commitment to God and his Word. He has an unwavering faith that has remained strong despite much suffering and affliction.

But perhaps what I like most about the author of Psalm 119 is his passion. His desire for God and his Word is intense, to say the least.

We've read of his longing throughout the psalm -

My soul is consumed with *longing* for your laws at all times. (v. 20)

How I *long* for your precepts! (v. 40)

My soul faints with *longing* for your salvation. (v. 81)

I open my mouth and pant, *longing* for your commands. (v. 131)



He longs for God's Word, and he longs for God's salvation. And we should not be surprised at either one. We know about the writer's devotion to God's truth. That has been the topic of virtually every verse. And we know about the writer's unfortunate circumstances as an innocent victim of unwarranted and unjustified persecution at the hands of evil men (see verses 109 and 110).

So I take this longing to be a desire primarily for physical salvation. The many references to his difficult circumstances would argue strongly for this interpretation. He wants to see the light of day and expresses what any normal human being would want - he wants to live!

Another reason I take this verse to mean physical salvation is because of the immediately preceding verse, "May your hand be ready to help me, for I have chosen your precepts" (Psalm 119:173). He is asking for God to help him by providing protection from his foes.

What about us? Should we pray for salvation, and should we pray for physical salvation, spiritual salvation, or both? I believe that it is appropriate for us to pray for any kind of salvation, and there are examples throughout the Bible of this.

In the New Testament, in Acts 12 we see the believers praying for Peter's release from prison. This was a legitimate prayer for his physical salvation.

In Luke 18, Jesus told a parable about the tax collector who cried out, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner". Is this not a prayer for spiritual salvation? And Jesus taught his disciples to pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matthew 6:12), another example of a prayer for spiritual salvation.

I also like his man for his humility. He longs for God's salvation. He knows that God is in control and that only God can provide the salvation he needs.

He expresses his humility in verse 176 - "I have strayed like a lost sheep." Even though the psalmist has proclaimed his innocence from any wrongdoing that would justify the way his enemies are treating him (see verses 78 and 86), he is the first to admit that he is still a sinner.

He has prayed for God to keep him away from deceit (v. 29), selfishness (v. 26), and worthless things (v. 37), no doubt because he has been guilty of such unrighteous behavior. He confesses, "before I was afflicted I went astray" (v. 67).

The psalmist has a biblical understanding of his sinfulness and is transparent about it before God and his peers, for he no doubt wrote this psalm as a song to be sung by the people of God.

This is the portrait of a true believer - one who is deeply aware of his depravity before a holy God, all the while depending on his God to be gracious to him and save him. May we follow in his footsteps, all the days of our lives.

PRAYER (in response to Psalm 119:174)

Jesus, only you can save me from my sin - its penalty, its power, and its presence. I need your salvation from the power of sin every day. Lately, anxiety and fear are prominent. Come and save me, King Jesus, because I have strayed like a lost sheep!

# BONUS CHAPTERS

## 23. 5 COMPELLING REASONS TO READ YOUR BIBLE TODAY

Are you looking for motivation to read your Bible today? There are many good reasons to do so; here are five. Any one of them should provide the inspiration you need to take action and follow through on your desire for some quality Bible-time.

Read the Bible today because . . .

### **1. The Bible is the authoritative Word of God.**

Imagine if Jesus Christ knocked on your front door and offered to come inside and have a face-to-face conversation with you. Wouldn't that be incredible? When you read the Bible that is precisely what can happen. God himself speaks to you. These are his words and he is oh so eager to share them with you. "All Scripture is breathed out by God" (2 Timothy 3:16).

### **2. The Bible teaches us how to grow spiritually.**

Do you ever feel like you've reached a plateau on your spiritual journey? Are you stuck in neutral? The Christian life is meant to be a life of change, a never-ending process of increasing Christ-likeness. Sure, there are days when you take a step or two backward, but overall, do you see growth over the past year, five years, ten years? If not, could it be due to a lack of spiritual food? Like a newborn baby, Peter says, "crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation" (1 Peter 2:2).

### **3. The Bible gives us the power to overcome any sin.**

We all have our weaknesses. There is always room for improvement. Is there a particular area of your life that you know needs to change? It could be a particular behavior or a bad attitude. Do you get angry too easily and overreact in certain situations? Whatever the problem, God's Word can provide the solution. This is why the psalmist could say "I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you" (Psalm 119:11).

### **4. The Bible prepares us to live successfully in this life.**

God told Joshua that if he meditated day and night on "this Book", and then did everything written in it, he would "be prosperous and successful" (Joshua 1:8). Let's not go overboard here and take this promise as a blank check. Verses like this should be viewed more as a prescription than a prediction. Certainly, spiritual success is in view – a life lived in the light of God's Word will lead to the love, joy, and peace that only God can give, regardless of our circumstances.

### **5. The Bible provides the direction we need to get to heaven in the next life.**

Surely this life is not all there is. And if the Bible is true and we will live forever somewhere, doesn't it make sense to devote much energy ensuring we know what happens to us when we die and where we will spend eternity? Forever is a very long time. How many of us have spent more time planning our summer vacations than our eternal destiny? Have you ever wondered "What will happen to me when I die?" Read the Bible and find out. As Paul said "the Holy Scriptures . . . are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15).

A great place to learn the meaning of salvation is in the book of John. I've put together a Study Guide to help you read and

understand the first 3 chapters of John's gospel. It's available on Amazon.com here:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00Y1UXWMS/>

## 24. HOW TO CULTIVATE THE HABIT OF DAILY BIBLE READING

Looking for some tips on how to cultivate the habit of daily Bible reading? Here are five surefire ways to increase your love for God and his Word.

### **1. Decide what time of day is best for you.**

Are you a morning person, or is later in the day better? We're all different. Some folks love to wake up in the morning and dive into the Word before doing anything else. But that may not be what's good for you, your schedule, and your family – especially if you are a parent with young children who need you from the moment you wake up.

So you'll need to figure this out. If you're married, this may require a conversation with your spouse. But be encouraged – this is not rocket science. It can be done. And you're smart enough to make it happen.

### **2. Find a place where you can be alone.**

Depending on your living situation, this can be a challenge. If you have a room at home where you can close the door and be left alone, go for it! But in many families, this can be impossible, at least when everyone is awake.

You may need to leave the house to be alone with God. Going to a nearby coffee shop or public library might work for you, or just take a drive and find a place to park.

### **3. Make a commitment to meet with God at the designated time and place.**

We all make appointments, right? Doctor, dentist, insurance agent, whoever. Well, don't you think it makes sense to make an appointment with God? Doesn't he deserve the same

respect you give your financial planner or tax preparer?

I urge you to cultivate an attitude that takes your daily Bible time seriously because you want to take God seriously. Sure, life will get in the way of your plans, and the unexpected will inevitably occur and you'll have days when your appointment with God gets canceled for any number of valid reasons. But if you are hungry for God and his truth, you will have the desire to keep this commitment.

#### **4. Do it whether you feel like it or not.**

There will be days when you are tempted by a lack of desire to read the Bible. That's OK. It's normal for our hunger for the Word to vary from day to day.

But think about this – if you only went to work on the days you felt like it, how often would you go to work? You know how it is – once you get there and get going, you usually get over those feelings.

If you start reading the Word even when you don't feel like it and just give it five minutes, I know what will happen – God will honor your persistence and before long those fickle feelings will be long gone.

#### **5. Pray about this.**

Ask God to help you to cultivate an increasing desire for him and his Word. Ask God to give you the self-discipline to put this plan into action every day (remember that self-control is a fruit of the Holy Spirit – see Galatians 5:22-23).

Do you think that God wants to answer such a prayer? Of course he does! And may he bless you greatly for spending quality time with him in the Word, and may your love for King Jesus increase as a result.

## 25. ARE YOU MAKING THESE 3 MISTAKES WHEN READING THE BIBLE?

Reading the Bible is critical to your spiritual growth. The Word of God is our daily bread, and without it, you'll become a weak and ineffective Christian.

So it's vital to spend quality time in the Bible every day. To improve your Bible reading, be sure to avoid these 3 big mistakes.

### **Bible Reading Mistake #1 - Not praying before reading.**

Perhaps you are so eager to get into the Word, you forget to ask God for help to understand what you are about to read. This is easy to do.

**What to do instead:** Get into the habit of praying before reading. Your prayer doesn't have to be long or fancy. Here's a good one to start with -- Psalm 119:18 simply says "Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law."

Isn't that a great prayer? Why not make it your own. You have two sets of eyes – one is physical and the other is spiritual. And we need God's help to focus our spiritual eyes so we can "see" (understand) his truth. Amen?

### **Bible Reading Mistake #2 – Not reading the Bible.**

Here's a question that may seem a bit strange: When you sit down to read the Bible, are you reading the Bible? Or are you reading a devotional book instead?

Now don't get me wrong – I'm all for reading good books about the Bible. But a good devotional is no substitute for



the Bible itself.

**What to do instead:** Make sure you are spending time actually reading the Bible! A true believer has a love for the Word that compels him/her to hunger and thirst for God's truth.

Again, it's OK to read Bible study guides and commentaries, and other books about spiritual growth. There are so many good ones out there! But don't forget to simply open the Book and read the Bible every day.

Reality Check – Do you have an appetite for God's Word? If not, ask God to give it to you. He would love to do that for you!

### **Bible Reading Mistake #3 - Random reading of favorite verses only.**

When you read the Bible, how do you go about it? Do you have a handful of favorite verses or passages that you tend to read repeatedly?

Please don't limit yourself to familiar passages. You are short-changing yourself if you do. God wrote the Bible so that we would read all of it!

**What to do instead:** Read the Bible one book at a time. Don't forget that the Bible is a book of books. There are 66 books in the Bible, and each is part of the One Story that God is telling us.

But each book is also a complete story or message in and of itself, and each book was written to be read in its entirety, and even in one sitting (like the shorter books of the New Testament written by Paul, Peter, James, and John).

So I encourage you to read one book at a time, each one in its entirety. One method is to read through the New Testament books, one by one. If you read a chapter a day, it will take about nine months. If you read three chapters a day, it will take three months.

So set a goal to read the entire New Testament within a certain period of time. Wouldn't that be cool?

And you'll cultivate a love for God's Word that will have life-changing results. For as you spend quality time in the Word, you are spending quality time with the Creator of the universe, and you'll find yourself caught up in the wonder of his love demonstrated through his Son Jesus.

## 26. 7 DEADLY SINS OF BIBLE READING (AND HOW TO AVOID THEM)

Reading the Bible can be the gateway to heavenly bliss or the pathway to subtle self-destruction. To read the Bible is to walk on holy ground, so we must come to the Word oh so aware of the fine line that exists between reading and sinning.

As you read this article, please take to heart 2 Corinthians 13:5 and "Examine yourselves . . . test yourselves".

### **Sin #1 - Reading without praying - the sin of proud self-reliance.**

Reading the Word must be bathed in prayer – before, during, and after. God is the ultimate Author of this Book and so we must go to him for understanding and the innumerable blessings he wants to shower upon us through the Bible.

**How to avoid it** – Make this humble prayer your own - "Let me understand the teaching of your precepts" (Psalm 119: 27a).

### **Sin #2 - Reading without meditating - the sin of mindless mysticism.**

Reading is only the beginning of our journey into God's truth. We must think about what we read, and think long and hard. Some parts of the Bible are more difficult to comprehend than others; when faced with a challenging passage, you may simply need to spend more time pondering it.

**How to avoid it** – Proclaim with conviction - "Then I will meditate on your wonders" (Psalm 119:27b). When opening

the Book, be opening, exercising, and filling your mind, not emptying it.

### **Sin #3 - Reading without communing - the sin of dead intellectualism.**

Reading the Bible is the means to the awesome end of deeper fellowship with God. If reading the Bible doesn't result in sweeter intimacy with King Jesus, something is amiss. Time in the Word should never be an end in itself. It's the entrance into the presence of Christ, our Creator, our Sustainer, and the Lover of our souls.

**How to avoid it** - As you read, pray like the psalmist, "I seek you with all my heart" (Psalm 119:10a) and "Do not utterly forsake me" (Psalm 119:8b).

### **Sin #4 - Reading without understanding - the sin of empty ritualism.**

Are the words only words? We commune with God through his Word as his Spirit reveals the meaning. Reading without understanding is not reading but a meaningless ritual, a mere formality that grieves the Spirit, displeases the Father, and dishonors his Son.

**How to avoid it** - As you realize the sacredness of Scripture, pray, "Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law" (Psalm 119:18). This is not just another book. Say with Peter "You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

### **Sin #5 - Reading without believing - the sin of self-righteous legalism.**

What do Bible reading, prayer, church attendance, giving money to the church, and helping the needy all have in common? They can be either the expression of saving faith or the expression of non-saving faith. For the genuine believer, they are evidence of life. For the false believer, they are

evidence of a spurious conversion and serve only to strengthen his self-deception. Bible reading, like any good work, is never the cause of our salvation but rather its result. The difference is infinitely, eternally huge.

**How to avoid it** – Ponder the wonder of salvation -- by grace, through faith, not by works (Ephesians 2:8-9). Nothing we do earns God's favor (including Bible reading). From start to finish, salvation is his work, not ours.

**Sin #6 - Reading without obeying - the sin of cheap grace.** Salvation is free, but it will cost you everything. Is this not the ultimate paradox of Scripture? We are not saved by good works, but for good works, and so Bible reading is one of the main activities God uses to empower us to live a life of increasing obedience, holiness, and Christ-likeness. Sinless perfection will escape us this side of heaven, but a changed life will not. If your Bible reading doesn't have life-transforming results, please consider the possibility that you are still dead in your sins and in need to be born of the Spirit (John 3:1-8).

**How to avoid it** – Spend time in Psalm 119 and meditate on the many verses that speak of obeying the Word. May these prayers be yours – "I will obey your decrees" (Psalm 119:8a) and "I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free" (Psalm 119:32).

**Sin #7 - Reading without studying - the sin of superficial skimming.**

"Raking is easy, but you get only leaves; digging is hard, but you might find diamonds" (John Piper). Reading is but the first step to understanding the meaning and rejoicing as one who finds great wealth (Psalm 119:162). Ask questions; record your thoughts and responses in a journal; do word

studies; join a Bible study group (or start one yourself). There are 101 ways to dig into the Word.

**How to avoid it** – Realize the need to dive in, not remain on the surface. This takes time and effort, fueled by the grace of God and the enabling of his Spirit. So get out your shovel and get digging, knowing that "it is God who works in you to will and to act" (Philippians 2:13 - another mind-boggling paradox).

And may your time in the Word be a source of divine renewal for the glory of God. While reading, be sure to be praying, meditating, communing, understanding, believing, obeying, and studying, and you are sure to declare, "Your statutes are my delight!" (Psalm 119:24).

***AUTHOR'S NOTE:***

I've expanded the above chapter into a 130-page book.

*7 Deadly Sins of Bible Reading:*

*Common Bible Reading Mistakes and How to Avoid Them*

<https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B09KZGV1XY>

## 27. THE CHURCH'S MOST FORGOTTEN BIBLE READING METHOD

There are many valid and effective Bible reading methods. The purpose of this article is to introduce you to the #1 most often overlooked and forgotten Bible reading method. But first, a question: When was the last time you received a personal letter (or email) from a dear friend or loved one?

Do you remember the anticipation you felt as you opened the letter/email and began to read? You couldn't read it fast enough, could you?

Now, stop and think about this: Did you read the letter in its entirety, or did you read only the first few sentences and put the letter down with the intent of finishing it later?

Perhaps you are thinking, "What a stupid question . . . Of course, I read the whole thing!"

Now, stop and think about what happened some 2,000 years ago when the Christians living in Ephesus received a letter from the Apostle Paul. Do you think there was a buzz of excitement as these believers gathered around to hear what their spiritual father had to say to them? At the time this letter was written, Paul was imprisoned in Rome, but he kept in touch with the many churches he founded by writing letters – 13 of those letters have been preserved as part of Holy Scripture, and he undoubtedly penned many others that did not make it into the Bible.

Imagine being a Christian in first-century Ephesus . . . when you come to the weekly prayer meeting at your neighbor's

house, the church leaders are quite excited – “Paul sent us a letter! He’s still in jail but he sent us a letter!”

So all the believers listen intently as someone begins to read the letter:

“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

The words just leap off the parchment and into your heart. Yes, that sounds like Paul all right. He called us “saints” and “the faithful in Christ Jesus.” Oh, how sweet those words sound to your ears. It’s like he’s right there, in your midst, the words of truth flowing from his mouth with that unique combination of humility and boldness you came to love during the three years he spent in Ephesus as your spiritual leader.

The reader continues: “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.”

Yes! Yes! The believers all around you are now filled with joy. We have so many spiritual blessings in Jesus our Savior; we have so much to praise God for! Paul spent many hours explaining those blessings to us when he was here – oh, it will be great to hear him teach those truths again today through this letter!

But suddenly the reader stops and decides that is enough. “Come back tomorrow night and I’ll pick it up where I left off. I don’t want to read the whole letter tonight. That’s all for now.”

OK, you can quit pretending you are a first-century Ephesian and come back to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Perhaps my example



above was a bit farfetched – you don't think the Ephesians would have read just the first few sentences of Paul's letter, do you? Of course not!

They would have read the entire letter, right?

In fact, wouldn't they have read the letter *in its entirety . . . in one sitting*?

My friend, when was the last time you read one of Paul's letters *in its entirety, in one sitting*? Have you ever read *any* book of the Bible *in its entirety, in one sitting*?

When Paul wrote his letters, they were written to be read *in their entirety, in one sitting*. So when we read Paul's letters, shouldn't we read them in the way they were intended to be read?

If you've never done this before, I encourage you to try it today. Start with Ephesians or one of the other shorter New Testament letters, and together we can bring this forgotten Bible reading method back into the memory of the 21st-century church.

For more practical tips on how to read the Bible one book at a time, please check out my book *The Forgotten Bible Reading Method: How to Read and Understand the Bible in 5 Simple Steps* at [www.amazon.com/dp/B00SEDLVH6](http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00SEDLVH6)

## 28. HAVE YOU READ THE WORLD'S BEST-SELLING BOOK OF ALL TIME?

Have you read the most-printed book of all time? According to Wikipedia, that book would be the Bible, which is at the top of their "List of most-printed single-volume books" with 5 billion-plus copies.

For the record, the Quran comes in second at 4 billion. Charles Dickens "A Tale of Two Cities" is fifth on the list with 200 million copies. J.R.R. Tolkien has two works in the Top Ten - "The Lord of the Rings" and "The Hobbit" (eight and nine, respectively).

The Guinness World Records website agrees with Wikipedia - "there is little doubt that the Bible is the world's best-selling and most widely distributed book."

<http://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/records-1/best-selling-book-of-non-fiction/>

The question I have for you today is this: Have you ever read the #1 best-selling and most widely published book in history - in its entirety? If not, I'd like to encourage you to give it a try. And here's an easy way to do so in a relatively short period.

Like any book, it's important that you read the whole thing. Depending on what version you choose, the Bible is around 1,200 pages long. So if you'd like to read the Bible in a year, all you have to do is read 3-4 pages a day.

But let's be a bit more realistic and assume that it's unlikely you'll read the Bible every day for the next 365 days. So how about this goal: you read the Bible five days a week for the next 50 weeks. This gives you a little breathing room 😊

Here's the math on this approach: 1,200 pages divided by 250 days equals about 5 pages per day. That's all it takes – five pages a day, five days a week, and you'll have read the whole Bible in a year. What do you say? Give it a try and let me know how it goes.

If your goal is to read the Bible in a year, check your version to see how many pages it has. Whatever the amount, divide it by 250 to get the approximate number of pages you'll need to read daily if you go with the five days a week plan.

Of course, if you'd like to take less time, say six months instead of twelve, just double the number of pages per day.

One final comment: there's no need to wait until January 1 to start. You can begin today! Any day is a good day to read the entire Bible, the best-selling book of all time.

# APPENDIX

## ALL 64 VERSES IN PSALM 119 ABOUT THE AUTHOR'S DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES

- 21 You rebuke the arrogant, who are accursed,  
those who stray from your commands.
- 22 Remove from me their scorn and contempt,  
for I keep your statutes.
- 23 Though rulers sit together and slander me,  
your servant will meditate on your decrees.
- 25 I am laid low in the dust;  
preserve my life according to your word.
- 28 My soul is weary with sorrow;  
strengthen me according to your word.
- 37 Turn my eyes away from worthless things;  
preserve my life according to your word.
- 40 How I long for your precepts!  
In your righteousness preserve my life.
- 42 then I can answer anyone who taunts me,  
for I trust in your word.
- 50 My comfort in my suffering is this:  
Your promise preserves my life.
- 51 The arrogant mock me unmercifully,  
but I do not turn from your law.
- 53 Indignation grips me because of the wicked,  
who have forsaken your law.
- 61 Though the wicked bind me with ropes,  
I will not forget your law.
- 69 Though the arrogant have smeared me with lies,  
I keep your precepts with all my heart.
- 70 Their hearts are callous and unfeeling,  
but I delight in your law.
- 71 It was good for me to be afflicted  
so that I might learn your decrees.
- 75 I know, LORD, that your laws are righteous,

and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me.  
77 Let your compassion come to me that I may live,  
for your law is my delight.  
78 May the arrogant be put to shame for wronging me  
without cause; but I will meditate on your precepts.  
81 My soul faints with longing for your salvation,  
but I have put my hope in your word.  
82 My eyes fail, looking for your promise;  
I say, "When will you comfort me?"  
83 Though I am like a wineskin in the smoke,  
I do not forget your decrees.  
84 How long must your servant wait?  
When will you punish my persecutors?  
85 The arrogant dig pits to trap me,  
contrary to your law.  
86 All your commands are trustworthy;  
help me, for I am being persecuted without cause.  
87 They almost wiped me from the earth,  
but I have not forsaken your precepts.  
88 In your unfailing love preserve my life,  
that I may obey the statutes of your mouth.  
92 If your law had not been my delight,  
I would have perished in my affliction.  
94 Save me, for I am yours;  
I have sought out your precepts.  
95 The wicked are waiting to destroy me,  
but I will ponder your statutes.  
98 Your commands are always with me  
and make me wiser than my enemies.  
107 I have suffered much;  
preserve my life, LORD, according to your word.  
109 Though I constantly take my life in my hands,  
I will not forget your law.  
110 The wicked have set a snare for me,  
but I have not strayed from your precepts.  
113 I hate double-minded people,

but I love your law.  
115 Away from me, you evildoers,  
that I may keep the commands of my God!  
116 Sustain me, my God, according to your promise, and I  
will live; do not let my hopes be dashed.  
117 Uphold me, and I will be delivered;  
I will always have regard for your decrees.  
118 You reject all who stray from your decrees,  
for their delusions come to nothing.  
119 All the wicked of the earth you discard like dross;  
therefore I love your statutes.  
121 I have done what is righteous and just;  
do not leave me to my oppressors.  
122 Ensure your servant's well-being;  
do not let the arrogant oppress me.  
123 My eyes fail, looking for your salvation,  
looking for your righteous promise.  
134 Redeem me from human oppression,  
that I may obey your precepts.  
139 My zeal wears me out,  
for my enemies ignore your words.  
141 Though I am lowly and despised,  
I do not forget your precepts.  
143 Trouble and distress have come upon me,  
but your commands give me delight.  
145 I call with all my heart; answer me, LORD,  
and I will obey your decrees.  
146 I call out to you; save me  
and I will keep your statutes.  
147 I rise before dawn and cry for help;  
I have put my hope in your word.  
149 Hear my voice in accordance with your love;  
preserve my life, LORD, according to your laws.  
150 Those who devise wicked schemes are near,  
but they are far from your law.  
153 Look on my suffering and deliver me,

for I have not forgotten your law.  
154 Defend my cause and redeem me;  
preserve my life according to your promise.  
155 Salvation is far from the wicked,  
for they do not seek out your decrees.  
156 Your compassion, LORD, is great;  
preserve my life according to your laws.  
157 Many are the foes who persecute me,  
but I have not turned from your statutes.  
158 I look on the faithless with loathing,  
for they do not obey your word.  
159 See how I love your precepts;  
preserve my life, LORD, in accordance with your love.  
161 Rulers persecute me without cause,  
but my heart trembles at your word.  
166 I wait for your salvation, LORD,  
and I follow your commands.  
170 May my supplication come before you;  
deliver me according to your promise.  
173 May your hand be ready to help me,  
for I have chosen your precepts.  
174 I long for your salvation, LORD,  
and your law gives me delight.  
175 Let me live that I may praise you,  
and may your laws sustain me.

## **VERSES IN PSALM 119 ABOUT THE AUTHOR'S ENEMIES WHO ARE PERSECUTING HIM**

- 21 You rebuke the arrogant, who are accursed,  
those who stray from your commands.
- 22 Remove from me their scorn and contempt,  
for I keep your statutes.
- 23 Though rulers sit together and slander me,  
your servant will meditate on your decrees.
- 42 then I can answer anyone who taunts me,  
for I trust in your word.
- 51 The arrogant mock me unmercifully,  
but I do not turn from your law.
- 53 Indignation grips me because of the wicked,  
who have forsaken your law.
- 61 Though the wicked bind me with ropes,  
I will not forget your law.
- 69 Though the arrogant have smeared me with lies,  
I keep your precepts with all my heart.
- 70 Their hearts are callous and unfeeling,  
but I delight in your law.
- 78 May the arrogant be put to shame for wronging me  
without cause;  
but I will meditate on your precepts.
- 84 How long must your servant wait?  
When will you punish my persecutors?
- 85 The arrogant dig pits to trap me,  
contrary to your law.
- 86 All your commands are trustworthy;  
help me, for I am being persecuted without cause.
- 87 They almost wiped me from the earth,  
but I have not forsaken your precepts.
- 95 The wicked are waiting to destroy me,  
but I will ponder your statutes.
- 98 Your commands are always with me  
and make me wiser than my enemies.



110 The wicked have set a snare for me,  
but I have not strayed from your precepts.  
113 I hate double-minded people,  
but I love your law.  
115 Away from me, you evildoers,  
that I may keep the commands of my God!  
118 You reject all who stray from your decrees,  
for their delusions come to nothing.  
119 All the wicked of the earth you discard like dross;  
therefore I love your statutes.  
121 I have done what is righteous and just;  
do not leave me to my oppressors.  
122 Ensure your servant's well-being;  
do not let the arrogant oppress me.  
134 Redeem me from human oppression,  
that I may obey your precepts.  
139 My zeal wears me out,  
for my enemies ignore your words.  
141 Though I am lowly and despised,  
I do not forget your precepts.  
150 Those who devise wicked schemes are near,  
but they are far from your law.  
155 Salvation is far from the wicked,  
for they do not seek out your decrees.  
157 Many are the foes who persecute me,  
but I have not turned from your statutes.  
158 I look on the faithless with loathing,  
for they do not obey your word.  
161 Rulers persecute me without cause,  
but my heart trembles at your word.

## **OTHER VERSES IN PSALM 119 ABOUT SUFFERING & AFFLICTION IN GENERAL**

- 25 I am laid low in the dust;  
preserve my life according to your word.
- 28 My soul is weary with sorrow;  
strengthen me according to your word.
- 50 My comfort in my suffering is this:  
Your promise preserves my life.
- 71 It was good for me to be afflicted  
so that I might learn your decrees.
- 75 I know, LORD, that your laws are righteous,  
and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me.
- 83 Though I am like a wineskin in the smoke,  
I do not forget your decrees.
- 92 If your law had not been my delight,  
I would have perished in my affliction.
- 107 I have suffered much;  
preserve my life, LORD, according to your word.
- 143 Trouble and distress have come upon me,  
but your commands give me delight.

## PRAYERS IN PSALM 119 FOR PHYSICAL SALVATION

- 22 Remove from me their scorn and contempt,  
for I keep your statutes.
- 25 I am laid low in the dust;  
preserve my life according to your word.
- 28 My soul is weary with sorrow;  
strengthen me according to your word.
- 37 Turn my eyes away from worthless things;  
preserve my life according to your word.
- 40 How I long for your precepts!  
In your righteousness preserve my life.
- 50 My comfort in my suffering is this:  
Your promise preserves my life.
- 77 Let your compassion come to me that I may live,  
for your law is my delight.
- 81 My soul faints with longing for your salvation,  
but I have put my hope in your word.
- 82 My eyes fail, looking for your promise;  
I say, "When will you comfort me?"
- 84 How long must your servant wait?  
When will you punish my persecutors?
- 86 All your commands are trustworthy;  
help me, for I am being persecuted without cause.
- 88 In your unfailing love preserve my life,  
that I may obey the statutes of your mouth.
- 94 Save me, for I am yours;  
I have sought out your precepts.
- 107 I have suffered much;  
preserve my life, LORD, according to your word.
- 116 Sustain me, my God, according to your promise, and I  
will live; do not let my hopes be dashed.
- 117 Uphold me, and I will be delivered;  
I will always have regard for your decrees.
- 121 I have done what is righteous and just;  
do not leave me to my oppressors.

- 122 Ensure your servant's well-being;  
do not let the arrogant oppress me.
- 123 My eyes fail, looking for your salvation,  
looking for your righteous promise.
- 134 Redeem me from human oppression,  
that I may obey your precepts.
- 146 I call out to you; save me  
and I will keep your statutes.
- 147 I rise before dawn and cry for help;  
I have put my hope in your word.
- 149 Hear my voice in accordance with your love;  
preserve my life, LORD, according to your laws.
- 153 Look on my suffering and deliver me,  
for I have not forgotten your law.
- 154 Defend my cause and redeem me;  
preserve my life according to your promise.
- 156 Your compassion, LORD, is great;  
preserve my life according to your laws.
- 159 See how I love your precepts;  
preserve my life, LORD, in accordance with your love.
- 170 May my supplication come before you;  
deliver me according to your promise.
- 173 May your hand be ready to help me,  
for I have chosen your precepts.
- 174 I long for your salvation, LORD,  
and your law gives me delight.
- 175 Let me live that I may praise you,  
and may your laws sustain me.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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