



Bible Study

January 06, 2021 (Lesson 8)

The Bible Speaks to Individuals

Psalms 1: 1-6; 119: 1-11, 97-104

Unit Theme: Why We Need the Bible

Central Truth: Through the Scriptures, God speaks to us.

Focus: Affirm that God speaks to individuals through the Scripture and commit to seek His direction through understanding of the Scripture.

Context: God gives personal instructions through Psalms 1 and 119.”

Golden Text: “Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me” (Ps. 119: 98).

Study Outline:

- I. God’s Word Forms Us (Ps. 1: 1-6)
- II. God’s Word Directs Us (Ps. 119: 1-11)
- III. God’s Word Informs Us (Ps. 119: 97-104)
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INTRODUCTION

The Bible is full of examples of individuals who were personally ministered to both by the Living Word and the written Word. Much of the Lord’s ministry was devoted to healing people—one-on-one. Sometimes He carried out these acts of kindness in the face of fierce opposition. At times, governmental authorities sought to hinder His work. At other times, even His disciples presented a problem, as with Him showing compassion to children (Mark 10: 13-14). Neither did they have time for Him to show mercy to a blind man (vv. 46-48). But one-on-one encounters were a major part of His ministry, and He did so against all odds.

In addition to the activities Jesus carried out were words spoken to individuals at various levels of need, including Nicodemus and Zacchaeus. In the Book of Hebrews, Jesus is depicted as our great High Priest: “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted

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like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (4: 15-16).

Individuals who have fallen into sin and need a way out, find direction in the Bible. John wrote, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1: 9).

What about individuals who are carrying a heavy burden and need to find relief? Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11: 28-30). Where is there a believer who would not find comfort in this beautiful promise?

Every need an individual encounters is addressed in the Word of God. A caring and merciful God has given us His Word, where we can find the path that makes us overcomers.

I. GOD'S WORD FORMS US (Ps. 1: 1-6)

A. Meditating on the Word (vv. 1-2)

¹ Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. ² But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

The Book of Psalms opens with a reference to the "blessed" person, which means the individual who is happy and fulfilled; who has a sense of well-being. This person enjoys blessedness because his or her life is in harmony with God. In New Testament language, we are talking about those who are in Christ and who walk as He walked. As John said, "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (1 John 2: 6).

The psalmist begins his description of the blessed man by discussing what he does not do. In so doing, he shows that sin takes a downward trajectory. In *The Treasury of David*, Charles Spurgeon captures this concept so well: When men are living in sin they go from bad to worse. At first they merely walk in the counsel of the careless and ungodly, who forget God—the evil is rather practical than habitual—but after that, they become habituated to evil, and they stand in the way of open sinners who willfully violate God's commandments; and if let alone, they go one step further,

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and become themselves pestilent teachers and tempters of others, and thus they sit in the seat of the scornful. They have taken their degree in vice, and as true doctors of damnation they are installed.

So now we know what the blessed person does not do, but what does he do? The question is answered in verse 2. First, he delights in “the law of the Lord,” or the whole Word of God. To find delight in the Word is to find delight in the God of the Word. The righteous person delights in the teachings and instructions found in Scripture. Therein resides the promise of the love of God, the mercy of God, and the grace of God. What joy these great truths bring to the people of God!

Second, the blessed person “meditate[s]” on the law of the Lord. As Thomas á Kempis said, the blessed person finds himself “in a nook with this Book” poring over it, day and night. He looks at it long enough to see its beauty and to discover its meaning. It is not his goal to master the Book, as it is to be mastered by it.

1. What kind of “counsel” do the “ungodly” give (v. 1)?
2. Describe what it means to “meditate” on Scripture (v. 2).

“I know the Bible is inspired because it inspires me.”—D. L. Moody B.

Prospering by Following the Word (v. 3)

3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

What a picture we have of the blessed man! He is planted like a tree that is carefully cultivated, set out in a favourable place to take advantage of the richness of the soil around it. Likewise, God has a plan for the life of every believer. We are carefully placed in our area of greatest usefulness. The psalmist wrote, “Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be” (139: 16 NIV).

A tree planted by a flowing stream will draw nourishment from the waters even in an arid area where hot winds are blowing. The blessed person has an unfailing source of life-giving water provided by Jesus Christ. What He said to the woman at the well He says to us: “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall

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never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4: 14).

The tree planted by the waters is a fruit-bearing tree and its leaves are continually green. There are no barren trees in God’s orchard. The blessed person will live a godly life and reap its benefits. In his commentary on Psalms, James A. Johnston wrote: “The godly man and woman produces thanksgiving in seasons of plenty, faith in seasons of doubt, patience in suffering, peace in turmoil, mercy when wronged, gentleness when falsely accused, strength in temptation, humility in leadership, and prayer in all seasons.”

The blessed man “succeeds in everything he attempts” (Ps. 1: 3 NET). The word translated “prosper” here and in other places in the Bible simply means “to succeed.” Charles Stanley, in *Success God’s Way*, said, “Success is the continuing achievement of becoming the person God wants you to be and accomplishing the goals God has helped you set.” I like another pastor’s definition: Success is “when our feet land on streets of gold.

How should Christians be like a tree?

“If we abide by the principles taught in the Bible, our country will go on prospering and to prosper. I make it a practice to read the Bible through once every year.” — Daniel Webster (1782-1852)

C. Perishing by Disobeying the Word (vv. 4-6) 4 The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.

5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

The situation is quite different for the ungodly, who walk in wickedness. Instead of being firmly established, they are like “chaff,” light and worthless, without any root to steady them. Their lives are marked by inconsistencies, tossed to and fro, swayed by every wind of lust and temptation. Both in character and in destiny, the ungodly follow a different path than that of the righteous.

“Satan would have you believe that following the way of the world is the best. How did that work out for Adam and Eve? Satan deceived Eve by telling her that if she ate of the tree in the middle of the garden, her eyes would be opened and she

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would “be like God, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3: 5 NKJV). Instead of having her eyes opened, this action led to spiritual blindness. The way of the world always leads away from God.

Since the wicked are characterized as chaff and have no portion in the company of the godly, they will not be able to survive the Day of Judgment (Ps. 1: 5). They have built their house on the sand. Jesus described their fate: “Every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it” (Matt. 7: 26-27).

Solomon warned, “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 14: 12).

On August 1, 2007, a bridge over Interstate 35 collapsed. This incident happened during the afternoon rush hour on the fifth-busiest bridge in Minnesota. More than 140,000 passengers cross this bridge each day. One hundred vehicles and eighteen construction workers dropped into the Mississippi River. It happened so suddenly. One moment everything seemed fine; the next moment everything had become chaotic. Just as suddenly, destruction will come to those who do not know the Lord.

Jesus described the difference in fate between the righteous and the wicked: “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matt. 7: 13-14).

- Describe three ways that the ungodly are different than the righteous.

“The purpose of the Bible? Salvation. God’s highest passion is to get His children home. His book, the Bible, describes His plan of salvation. The purpose of the Bible is to proclaim God’s plan and passion to save His children.” —Max Lucado

II. GOD’S WORD DIRECTS US (Ps. 119: 1-11)

A. Delighting in the Word (vv. 1-4)

¹ Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. ² Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart. ³ They

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also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways. 4 Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently.

Psalms 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible. It is interesting that it is only two psalms after the Bible's shortest chapter—Psalm 117. From its first verse to its last verse, the Bible is the subject of Psalm 119. Much has been written and preached on this psalm. John Calvin, a principal advocate for the Reformation, preached twenty-two sermons over a six-month period covering its twenty-two sections. Thomas Manton, a Puritan pastor, wrote three books containing 1,600 pages and 190 sermons—more than one sermon per verse from Psalm 119.

Ten words are used in this chapter to represent God's message to His people: testimonies, commandments, precepts, word, law, way, truth, judgments, righteousness, and statutes. In verses 1-4, the Word is referred to as the way, the law, testimonies, and precepts. The way speaks to the path God follows to save people, and the way we must travel to find redemption. The law teaches us the way of righteousness and is a teacher to lead us to Christ. The testimonies bear witness of things yet to happen and represent good things to come. The precepts address the concerns and duties of life leading us down the path of righteousness.

The psalmist opens this chapter with a call to obey the instructions found in the Word of God. Such obedience leads to seeking wholeheartedly to know the Lord and walking before Him with integrity. This lofty goal may be reached only when one's life is ordered according to the teachings of Scripture. When you call upon the Lord, do you seek to dwell in His presence and to have His favour upon your life? Do you seek Him with your "whole heart" (v. 2)?

Children of God are admonished not to be workers of iniquity who knowingly follow a sinful lifestyle (v. 3). Rather, they must walk in the way of the Lord—to constantly follow the path God has set forth in His Word. Verse 4 says it is God who commands us to obey His precepts and to faithfully and diligently follow His directions under all circumstances.

"The longer you read the Bible, the more you will like it; it will grow sweeter and sweeter; and the more you get into the spirit of it, the more you will get into the Spirit of Christ."—William Romaine

B. Knowing the Word (vv. 5-8)

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5 O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes! 6 Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments. 7 I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments. 8 I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly.

The psalmist had a great desire to be loyal to the Word of God. The life of a true believer is marked by a holy desire to please the Lord and an earnest effort to obey His decrees. This combination of desire and action are essential to fulfilling the Lord's instructions. James wrote: "Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, . . . being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing" (James 1: 22, 25 ESV).

The psalmist said he could live without regrets, if he kept his focus on the Lord's commandments (v. 6). If we develop a deep love for the Word of God, diligently seek to understand what it requires, and consciously practice its precepts, we can live an overcoming life. When our heart is saturated with divine truth, God's Word becomes "a lamp unto [our] feet, and a light unto [our] path" (v. 105). When we have not intentionally neglected, willfully disobeyed, or callously disregarded any of the Lord's commandments, we can walk with confidence before God and people. We have nothing to be ashamed of."

How can we lead a shame-free life?

Stay in the Right Lane

When you are on the highway, you are expected to choose one lane to drive in, though there may be lanes to your left and right. If you swerve to the left or the right, you're an accident waiting to happen. There is a time and an appropriate way to change lanes.

God's Word gives you a lane to stay in. That lane is based on the written Word and then affirmed by the work of the Spirit in terms of specific application. Stay in that lane and do everything He tells you to do and He will make your way prosperous.— Tony Evans' Book of Illustrations By studying the Scripture and understanding that the regulations God requires of His people are fair, the writer's heart was filled with praise and thanksgiving to the Lord (v. 7). When the Holy Spirit has fully illuminated our minds, we come to understand that each of the divine commandments are meant for our benefit—always to do us good and never to do us harm. The more we

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see the good that God intends toward us, the more we will honour and glorify Him and the more we will be inclined to magnify His name.

The psalmist expressed a firm commitment to “keep” the “statutes” (the commands) of the Lord (v. 8). But he also pleaded that the Lord would not abandon him. Although his affirmation was strong, he knew he must have the Lord’s help to carry out his intention. Faith in God and resolve to do the right thing go hand in hand. The psalmist did not want to be left to his own strength alone. Any believer can identify with his concern. How dependent we are on God’s grace and power!

C. Obeying the Word (vv. 9-11)

9 Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. 10 With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. 11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

If we are to live a pure life, at what age should we start? The psalmist states this journey should begin during our youth. Too much of one’s youth can be wasted on pursuing paths that lead away from God. As a result, many times the individual never makes a commitment to serve the Lord.

The Book of Daniel gives examples of young people who had the courage to follow God at an early age and who, as a result, impacted their generation. Daniel was one, and his three Hebrew friends were the others. When the king offered them food from his table, “Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat” (Dan. 1: 8). When the three young Hebrew men faced a fiery furnace, they declared, “Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us. . . . But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods” (3: 17-18). This kind of determination moves a follower of the Lord down the path of purity. The young person who follows the path laid out by the Word will probably be following this same path many years later.

Not only did David resolve to live according to God’s Word, but he also pledged to seek after the Lord with all of his heart (Ps. 119: 10). Seeking the Lord with his whole heart involved asking God for the power and ability to live righteously. While a person is praying, his chances of staying on the right path are greatly enhanced. In prayer, his eyes and heart are fixed on the divine purpose for his life. To seek the

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Lord with all our heart is to be constantly directed by the Holy Spirit and guided by the principles laid out in Scripture.

The psalmist was not content to only hear or read the Word, but to memorize it, meditate on it, treasure it, and store it in his heart (v. 11). Having hidden the Word in his heart, it was there to counsel him when he needed it, comfort him along the way, and keep him from falling into sinful ways.”

- How can a young person live purely in an impure world?

“Wherever the Bible has been consistently applied, it has dramatically changed the civilization and culture of those who have accepted its teaching. No other book has ever so dramatically changed individual lives and society in general.” — John F. Walvoord

III. GOD’S WORD INFORMS US (Ps. 119: 97-104)

A. Finding Wisdom in the Word (vv. 97-100)

97 O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. 98 Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. 99 I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. 100 I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.

The psalmist affirmed his love for the Word of God and listed benefits he received through his meditation on the Scripture. The Bible continues to be the most indispensable book available to us. Its pages offer words of wisdom and practical advice that serve us well on life’s journey, and will lead us to enjoy eternal blessings. In *Exploring the Psalms*, John Phillips quotes Odell Shepherd, who wrote concerning the Bible’s impact on America: “The Bible has been a teacher to our best men, a rebuke to our worst, and a noble companion to us all.”

The psalmist’s deep love of the Word led him to make it his source of meditation (v. 97). He said he meditated on it all day long. Is it true love for the Word if we fail to explore its teachings and practice its principles?

David also found wisdom in the Word (v. 98). Its commandments never become obsolete and are always effective in outwitting Satan. Jesus told His disciples, “Be

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ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves” (Matt. 10: 16). James advised, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (James 1: 5).”

“The psalmist also derived insight and understanding from his constant attention to the Word (vv. 99-100). His insight exceeded that of the teachers and elders of his day. Centuries later, twelve-year-old Jesus taught the teachers and leaders in the Temple, leaving them astonished at His insight (Luke 2: 46-47). With so much wise advice and keen insight available to us in the Bible, why would we deprive ourselves of its truths?”

- How does the psalmist describe the wisdom available through God’s Word?

“No other work of man in any language even faintly resembles the intricate structure and design of the Bible. The fact remains—only an infinite mind could have devised this Book of books.”—Winkie Pratney

B. Keeping the Word (vv. 101-102)

101 I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word. 102 I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me.

Dwight L. Moody said of the Bible, “This book will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this book.” David had an intense desire to navigate the path of righteousness. The compass he used to do so was the Word of God. On one occasion, he prayed, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life” (Ps. 139: 23-24 NLT). To stay on the road of righteousness, we must watch our step and avoid anything that is an offense to God. The road of life has ditches and potholes that can cause us to stumble and fall. Adhering to the royal roadmap will enable us to sidestep those perils.

We cannot overcome evil through carnal means. We have the greatest Teacher of all, the Lord himself. He has given us the Holy Spirit to lead us “into all truth” (John 16: 13). The Holy Spirit points out the way for us as He illuminates our mind and empowers us to do service for the Master. It is He who enables us to live out the Lord’s teachings. Are you open to the instruction which comes from the Spirit that you may walk the path of righteousness in obedience to God? If so, the Scriptures will come alive when the Holy Spirit brings their truth to bear upon your heart.”

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“Leave not off reading the Bible till you find your hearts warmed. . . . Let it not only inform you, but inflame you.”—Thomas Watson

C. Understanding the Word (vv. 103-104)

103 How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! 104 Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.

The study of the Word of God brings satisfaction and delight. The truths of the Bible are pleasant and desirable, nourishing and refreshing. The Scriptures are “sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb” (19: 10). Jeremiah said, “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart” (Jer. 15: 16). What does the Word taste like to you?

The Message paraphrases the first part of Psalm 119: 104 this way: “With your instruction, I understand life.” The Wisdom Literature of the Bible deals with the daily affairs of life, and offering clear direction in various circumstances. This is why we should frequently read from the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and James. Throughout the Bible, we are given practical and powerful knowledge on how to live a godly life, and how to get to heaven.

The Bible contains the essential knowledge needed to keep life in perspective, to have a proper view of things, and to understand the importance of developing a God-honoring character. It also teaches us the difference between right and wrong, and leads us to hate the things God hates, and love what God loves. As our understanding increases, we grow to hate “every false way” (v. 104)—everything that is contrary to the Word.”

- Describe the holy hatred available through the Scriptures.

CONCLUSION

The Bible speaks to us about our eternal destiny. When the light of the Word shines upon us, we can see our need to follow God. Drawn by the Holy Spirit, we are convicted of our sin and our need of salvation. When we as believers go astray, words from John point us in the right direction: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1: 9).

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GOLDEN TEXT CHALLENGE

“THOU THROUGH THY COMMANDMENTS HAST MADE ME WISER THAN MINE ENEMIES: FOR THEY ARE EVER WITH ME” (Ps. 119: 98).

The Art of War, written at least five centuries before the birth of Christ, is one of the most influential books on military strategy ever written. It was penned by Chinese military strategist Sun Tzu, and his words still influence leaders today.

When it comes to spiritual warfare, however, the source we need to consult is God’s Word. Its wisdom will enable us to overcome the enemy of our soul. We need to feed on its command and promises so it will “ever” be with us in every situation.

Daily Devotions:

M. Enoch’s Fellowship With God • Genesis 5: 21-24

T. Moses’ Face-Time With God • Numbers 12: 4-8

W. God Calls Jeremiah • Jeremiah 1: 4-10

T. The Scriptures Testify About Jesus • John 5: 36-39

F. The Spirit Speaks to the Church • Acts 15: 13-22

S. Hearing God’s Word Produces Faith • Romans 10: 8-17”

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