

## Psalm 119: A Contemplation and Celebration of the Word of God and the God of the Word

### Introduction to Psalm 119

1. Psalm 119 is the longest psalm and the longest chapter in the Bible.
  - a. It is composed of 176 verses.
  - b. It is a wisdom psalm (cp. Psalms 1 and 19).
2. Psalm 119 is an acrostic psalm.
  - a. It is divided into 22 sections; each section is eight verses long, corresponding to the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet (e.g., Aleph, Beth, Gimel, etc.).
  - b. The first three verses constitute an introduction to the psalm; the last three, a conclusion.
3. In Hebrew (the original language of the psalm), the first word in each verse of a section begins with the Hebrew letter corresponding to that section.
  - a. For example, in the first section, Aleph, each verse begins with a word that starts with the Hebrew letter Aleph.
  - b. The writer was guided by the Holy Spirit, but it is apparent he gave a great deal of careful thought to the subject matter of this psalm: God and His Word.
4. Nearly all the verses in the psalm are addressed to God.
  - a. Psalm 119 is rightly described as a prayer to God concerning the Word of God.
  - b. A good way to begin your devotional time each day is to spend a few minutes reflecting on a Section of Psalm 119.
5. The subject matter of the psalm is the Word of God. Nearly every verse mentions the Word of God.
  - a. For sake of variety, the psalmist used several synonyms for the Word of God.
  - b. Depending on your translation of the Bible, synonyms include:

Law / Instruction	Commandments
Testimonies / Decrees	Rules
Ways / Path	Word(s)
Precepts	Promise
Statutes	Judgments / Ordinances

6. To derive the most practical benefit out of the study of Psalm 119, there are several questions that should be asked of the passage under consideration:
  - a. What should my attitude (mindset) be toward God; toward His Word?
  - b. What activity should I engage in toward God; toward His Word; in response to His Word?
  - c. What quality or characteristic is revealed concerning God? Concerning His Word? How does the character and nature of God's Word reflect the character and nature of God Himself?
  - d. What benefit / blessing will I receive from a proper attitude and / or proper response to God and His Word?
  - e. What is revealed concerning the wicked, the enemies of God and His Word? What attitude am I to have toward the wicked?
7. The format of each lesson reflects the three key questions of Bible Interpretation:
  - a. What does the passage say?
    - 1) Five translations of each verse are provided in parallel format for the purpose of comparison: *English Standard Version; New King James Version; New American Standard Bible; New International Version; New Living Translation.*
    - 2) My personal paraphrase of each verse. You may want to write your own.
  - b. What does it mean?
    - 1) Commentary from various Bible study sources to aid in understanding.
    - 2) Personal commentary and reflection.
  - c. How does it apply?
    - 1) My personal application of each verse.
    - 2) This is meant to be suggestive for your own applications.
  - d. At the conclusion of each section, you will find a compilation of my paraphrase of each verse.

### **Each Day Before You Begin**

1. Start with prayer.
  - Thank God for His Word and for the opportunity to spend time with Him through meditation on His Word and in prayer. (Psalm 1:1-3; 119:97)
  - Ask the Lord to help you to draw near to Him and thank Him for His promise that He will draw near to you. (James 4:8; Psalm 145:18)

- Ask the Lord to open your eyes and help you to see and understand the wonderful things that are in His Word. (Psalm 119:18; 104:34) Pray that He will show you how to apply His Word to your daily life. (Matthew 7:24-27; James 1:22-25)
2. Read slowly through the section you are going to meditate on to get an overview.
- It may be helpful to you to read the passage out loud; this can help you to focus in on the Lord and His Word.
  - Read prayerfully. Note that as you are reading, you are actually expressing a prayer to God.

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