



CAPITOL COMMISSION

Treasuring God's Word Through Study

PSALM 119 – SELECTED VERSES; DEUTERONOMY 17:14-20

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As a leader, how do you deal with issues that come before you with which you are not knowledgeable or familiar? You read, seek counsel from others, ask questions, and talk to experts on the subject. You may be well motivated to pursue the subject since you may have to vote or make a decision regarding that issue.

Each of us must eventually deal with the most important issues of life. Why am I here? What happens to me when I die? Who is God and what is He like? How can I be right with God? How does He want me to live? It is only in God's Word we find answers to these questions. When dealing with such important issues we should be well motivated to study the Scriptures so that we may find the truth regarding these most important issues.

The title of our series of studies in Psalm 119 has been “*Treasuring God's Word*”. We have dealt with a number of subjects related to why we should treasure the Bible and how we do so. We have seen that this Psalm contains **praises** for God's Word – for what it is and what it does in our lives. It shares **proclamations** about God's written revelation – declaring love and pursuit of God's truth. We have also seen **prayers** to God for help in understanding and applying the Bible. All this naturally leads us to a simple, practical application – the importance of STUDYING the Bible. Indeed, faithfully reading and studying it is perhaps the best way (if not the only way) to show that we truly treasure God's Word.

Three times in Psalm 119 the writer speaks of “learning” God's Word:

*I shall give thanks to You with uprightness of heart,
When I learn Your righteous judgments. (vs. 7)*

*It is good for me that I was afflicted, That I may learn
Your statutes. (vs. 71)*

*Your hands made me and fashioned me; Give me
understanding, that I may learn Your commandments.
(vs. 73)*

Ten times he prays for God to “teach” him the scriptures (vs. 12, 26, 33, 64, 66, 68, 108, 124, 135, 171). These may be summed up with verse 33:

*Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes, And I
shall observe it to the end.*

We see a deep desire to know God's Word better. We hear heartfelt prayers for God to help make His Word known. How does this take place? We only learn God's Word by our own careful reading and study of the scriptures. Going to church and regularly hearing the Bible preached and taught is vitally important, but it is not enough. A “daily devotional” can encourage us in our Christian life, but will not give us the knowledge of the Word we need. In this study we will look at some key principles which will encourage and guide us in our own personal study of God's Word. Before we jump into our lesson, let us read the next section of Psalm 119:

◊

Samekh.

*¹¹³I hate those who are double-minded,
But I love Your law.*

*¹¹⁴You are my hiding place and my shield;
I wait for Your word.*

*¹¹⁵Depart from me, evildoers,
That I may observe the commandments of my God.*

*¹¹⁶Sustain me according to Your word, that I may live;
And do not let me be ashamed of my hope.*

*¹¹⁷Uphold me that I may be safe,
That I may have regard for Your statutes continually.*

BIBLE STUDIES

INTERIM BIBLE STUDY

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14 * 8:00 A.M & 12:00 NOON * SENATE PRESIDENT'S CONFERENCE ROOM (M219) * BREAKFAST & LUNCH PROVIDED

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Treasuring God's Word Through Study

¹¹⁸You have rejected all those who wander from Your statutes, For their deceitfulness is useless.

¹¹⁹You have removed all the wicked of the earth like dross; Therefore I love Your testimonies.

¹²⁰My flesh trembles for fear of You, And I am afraid of Your judgments.

Now let's consider some important principles which will guide us and encourage us in our study of God's Word.

THE STUDY OF GOD'S WORD IS IMPORTANT FOR LEADERS

As leaders and influencers of people you have a tremendous responsibility given you by God. (Romans 13:1). Most Bible scholars believe King David was the author of Psalm 119, which would certainly show the priority of the Bible in his life. God gave a command to the kings of Israel which is certainly good counsel for political leaders and government officials today:

¹⁸“Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests.

¹⁹“It shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes, ²⁰that his heart may not be lifted up above his countrymen and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or the left, so that he and his sons may continue long in his kingdom in the midst of Israel. *Deuteronomy 17:14-20*

We realize the commands and promises in this passage were specific to the kings of the nation of Israel. However it points out the importance for the leaders of a nation to know, understand, and apply the truth of God's Word in their own lives and in their role as leaders. We find a similar command to Joshua, who was primarily a political and military leader for Israel:

“Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. “This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.

Joshua 1:8-9

Again, these were promises made specifically to Joshua as he faced the overwhelming task of replacing Moses as leader of the people of Israel. But the importance for a leader to seek to know and follow God's Word is just as true today as it was for Joshua so long ago.

WHAT IS THE BIBLE ALL ABOUT?

An important fundamental that will help us in our study of the Word is a clear understanding of what the Bible is all about. Many approach the scriptures as a rule book, a “road map for life”, or a collection of good advice on how to live. The Bible, from beginning to end, is actually a book about Jesus and a story of the redemption of sinful people. This is true even of the Old Testament. We read in Luke 24:27 how Jesus, **“...Beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.”** The Bible is not about us and what we must do. It is about Jesus and what He has done.

EVERY VERSE, CHAPTER, AND BOOK IN THE BIBLE IS CONNECTED, FORMING THE GRAND STORY OF GOD'S SALVATION OF HIS PEOPLE.

Though the Bible is made up of 66 different books by over 40 different authors, it still has only one main theme – God's loving plan to redeem and restore imperfect people through the perfect work of His Son. Having this understanding of the nature of the Bible

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will determine how we approach and study it. If we look at it as rule book or a roadmap, we will study it in bits and pieces merely looking for rules and principles. If we see it as the grand story of redemption we'll look to see how it points to Jesus and what He has done for us. We'll see God's law. We'll read of how fully and completely every person has sinned and failed to keep God's law. We'll learn how through grace God has provided a way for us to have those sins forgiven in order to have a right relationship with God. This culminated in the suffering and death of the perfect Son of God on the cross so that our sins might be placed upon Him and His perfect goodness given to us. Those who repent and trust in Christ will receive a new life and a changed heart and out of love for Him seek to please Him in every thought and action. Understanding what the Bible is all about is vital to effectively studying the Scriptures.

THERE IS ONLY ONE MEANING

Many of us when talking about the Bible have heard someone say, or perhaps we have said ourselves, "Well, what this verse means to me is..." You could go around a group of people and get several different ideas about what a given passage of Scriptures means. As we pursue Bible study we should start out with the understanding that ***every passage has only one true meaning***. It really doesn't matter what a verse means *to me*. The important question is simply *what does the passage mean?* What did God, speaking through a human author intend for this passage to say. Erroneous views of Scripture say the Bible simply ***contains*** truth from God or is merely a collection of works of man that ***becomes*** truth from God as we read it. Many approach Scripture believing there is no absolute truth or meaning in its pages other than what each individual may ascribe to it. On the contrary, "All Scripture is inspired by God" (2 Timothy 3:16). God communicated through men who, "Moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Peter 1:21). God used a particular author, to speak to a particular audience, for a particular reason, about particular truths. Our job in studying the Scriptures is to determine the correct meaning and from there make application of its truth

to our lives.¹ There is only one correct interpretation of a passage, although there may be many different applications for our lives.

The question quickly arises as to why then are there so many divisions and denominations in Christianity. The answer is that that we are all fallible human beings who struggle to properly understand the truth God has revealed to us. This does not mean there is no correct interpretation. Logically there cannot be many differing correct interpretations. This certainly should not discourage us from seeking the correct meaning of any passage we might study. If anything this should motivate us to diligently pursue the meaning of God's Word.

NEVER READ A BIBLE VERSE

Perhaps the single most important, practical principle of Bible study we can learn is "Never read a Bible verse...Instead, always read at least a paragraph".² This has to do with always reading a verse or passage in its context. It is often said the three rules of real estate are "location, location, location". The three rules of Bible study are "context, context, context". Whenever you study a verse or passage of Scripture, you should determine not only the meaning of the verse or sentence, but seek how it fits into the paragraph, chapter, book, and finally, the whole Bible and the story of redemption. We can take verses or passages out of context and make them mean almost anything. Studying a passage in its context will go a long way in helping us determine what a passage means.

THE HARDEST PART: GETTING STARTED AND STAYING AT IT

The principles we've covered above are key to how we approach our study of Scripture. We should keep them in mind every time we open the pages of the Bible. The real challenge is consistently and systematically spending time in the Word. Here are just a few practical suggestions you might find helpful:

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DEVELOP A TIME, PLACE, AND A PLAN

Half the battle is setting up a consistent time and place to spend time in the Word every day. Many get up a little earlier in the morning to ensure available time. Others aim for the evening, perhaps before going to bed. Whenever it may be, the important thing is making a commitment to open the Word each day. It is also helpful to use a plan to help systematically read through the Bible. We have included a 90 day reading guide along with the notes of this study. By using the guide and spending 15 – 20 minutes a day, you can read through the New Testament in three months. This is a great way to start the habit of treasuring God's Word through reading and study.

GET A GOOD STUDY BIBLE

A good study Bible is invaluable in helping to gain a better understanding of the Scriptures. They contain introductions to each book that give background and insight into the author, the intended audience, the issues involved in the writing of the book, and other helpful information. You also might find a modern translation such as the New American Standard (NASB) or the English Standard Version (ESV) to be helpful as well. The MacArthur Study Bible we use in our studies at the capitol is an excellent tool for reading and studying God's Word.

USE A NOTEBOOK OR JOURNAL

Using a notebook to record observations about the passage you are reading can be a great help in studying the Word and putting into practice in your life. It doesn't need to be anything fancy, a simple spiral notebook will do. As you read the passage, it may help to keep in mind this process:

Scripture – Read the given passage for the day

Observation / Interpretation – What is the passage saying? Again, keep in mind the context.

Application – What does this passage mean in my life? You might look for the following:

- Sins to Forsake
- Promises to Claim
- Examples to Follow
- Commands to Obey
- Summary Thought for Today

Prayer – Ask God to help you understand and apply what you have read to your life. You may even want to write out these prayers in your notebook.

As we progress in our study of the Scriptures, there are many different kinds of studies we might pursue. Topical studies, word studies, book studies, biographical studies, and more all open up amazing truths from God's Word. The most important thing for us to do, however is simply to consistently and systematically read through God's Word, keeping in mind the theme of the glorious story of salvation in Christ; looking for the true meaning of the passage, and always mindful of the context in which we find it.

CONCLUSION

- **GOD'S WORD IS VITALLY IMPORTANT IN THE LIFE OF A LEADER.**
- **IF WE TRULY TREASURE GOD'S WORD, WE WILL READ IT, STUDY IT, AND SEEK TO APPLY IT TO OUR DAILY LIVES.**
- **THIS REQUIRES A PLAN. I ENCOURAGE YOU TO JOIN IN READING THROUGH THE NEW TESTAMENT OVER THE NEXT THREE MONTHS.**

¹ The activity of seeking the correct meaning or interpretation of a passage is called "hermeneutics". This is the theory, principles, and practice of interpreting the Bible.

² Koukl, Gregory. Never Read a Bible Verse. Stand to Reason Ministries. str.org.