



Psalm 119

Lesson 1

Author:

The author doesn't identify himself, but suggestions of David, Ezra, and Daniel have been made.

Theme:

Although there are several central themes in Psalm 119, the most dominant is the Word of God. The Psalmist begins with the proclamation that the true source of blessing in life is found in walking in the light of God's revealed truth and seeking Him with a whole heart, reminiscent of the blessedness revealed in Psalm 1 and 19. The writer is declaring his dependence on, his love for, and his desire to be obedient to God's Word in all areas and at all times in his life. In the midst of the many trials and tribulations that he experiences, the writer understands that commitment to God's law is the only way to live a significant life.

Style:

Psalm 119 is the longest of the poetic psalms. It is an acrostic written in 22 sections with 8 lines per section. Each section begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Every section refers to one or more of the eight terms used by the author to identify an aspect of Scripture: law, precepts, testimonies, commandments, judgments, statutes, ordinances, and word. In the use of those terms he articulates that every aspect, jot and tittle, of God's words should be considered seriously and reverently because in them we find and identify God's person and our identity and purpose as His creation.

Application:

The author is not only identifying his heart's desire in seeking God's truth for his life, he is teaching others what is necessary for that process to be successful. The first necessary element must be to be fully convinced of the supremacy, authority, and character of God Himself in order to recognize the power and significance of loving and obeying His every word. Next, one must study and meditate on God's word consistently in order to have its full influence on their life and behavior. Also, understanding and applying each aspect of God's word (law, precepts, ordinances, etc.) is important in discerning truth for every area of life. It is in this application that one becomes truly "blessed." Another significant teaching of Psalm 119 is how to use God's truth to endure suffering. The writer of this psalm refers many times to difficulties in life such as rejection, reproach, afflictions, and persecutions, and reiterates how clinging to God's words enabled him to endure through them. Through all of that he stresses the overriding reality that if a person desires to live fully for God and His Truth, there must be a deep realization that God's ways and the world's ways are dramatically different. Therefore, a person must be fully aware of the tension that will be experienced in choosing God's word over the demands of the world and the flesh.

Week 1 The nature and authority of God in Psalm 119

It is evident that the writer of Psalm 119 believes that God, in contrast to all other authorities, has the right to determine the parameters of human truth that should influence all thought and behavior. Therefore, he must have had some distinct concepts of God's person and character that would encourage that absolute trust and engagement. Our understanding of God moves us to our confidence in Him and our dependence on Him. Consequently, what we believe about God is foundational to our spiritual growth and progress in the Christian life. What we believe about Him must be shaped by what He has stated about Himself. God uses His creation, His Word, and His Spirit to give us that correct information, therefore, we must be very diligent to seek Him through those avenues, or we will create a false god made in our own image. In Psalm 119, as in many other places, God specifically identifies aspects of His nature that enable us to form a correct view of His majesty and position of sovereignty that gives us confidence in following His word.

1. What five things does the psalmist say is the way a man becomes "blessed" and "blameless"? Psalm 119:1-3 (blessed-ashar-happy; blameless-tamin-complete; whole; having integrity.)

2. Much of what was understood about God came through the way He identified Himself through His names. From two of the main names of God and their compounds and meanings below, explain, using several of the names, why the psalmist of 119 would believe he must make God's Word (law, testimonies, precepts etc.) his diligent pursuit and top priority in life.
 - A. Exodus 3:14-15 hayah-(transliterated into English YHWH-Jehovah) to be; implies no beginning but always is; God's name forever Exodus 3:15
 Compounds of hayah
 - Isaiah 6:3,5 Yahweh-tsabaoth- Lord of hosts-governs with the armies of heaven
 - Genesis 22:14 Yahweh-yireh-the Lord will provide
 - Exodus 15:26 Yahweh-rophe-the Lord your healer
 - Exodus 17:15 Yahweh-nissi-the Lord is my banner-leads His people to victory over enemies.
 - Exodus 31:13 Yahweh-meqaddishkem-the Lord who sanctifies-draws His people to holiness
 - Judges 6:24 Yahweh-shalom-the Lord who makes His people whole in freedom
 - Psalm 23:1 Yahweh-roiy-the Lord is my shepherd-to lead, guide, and protect
 - Jeremiah 23:6 Yahweh-tsidkenyu-the Lord is our righteousness
 - Ezekiel 48:35 Yahweh-shammah- the Lord is there-to save His people Israel
 - B. Genesis 31:13; 46:3 El-mighty God; God of all power and strength; plural Elohim
 Compounds of El or Elohim
 - Genesis 17:1; 28:3 El Shaddai-God Almighty or God Omnipotent
 - Genesis 14:19-22 El Elyon-God Most High-God of supreme sovereignty
 - Genesis 21:33 El Olam-God eternal-the everlasting God
 - Deuteronomy 5:26, Joshua 3:10 Hayah-El-the living God (Biblical Doctrine)

Explanation:

3. *What similar phrases does the psalmist use to describe God's word in the following verses?*

Psalm 119:142

Psalm 119: 151

Psalm 119:160

4. *The word "truth" in Hebrew is emet which means certainty or dependability. It comes from a verb which means to make firm or support. What does the use of that word tell you about why the psalmist was adamant about the significance of living God's word? How would a strong understanding of that word cause you to trust God and His Word more fully?*

5. *What do these other passages reveal about God and His truth?*

Deuteronomy 32:4

Psalm 19:9

Proverbs 23:23

John 14:6

John 17:17

Romans 1:25

6. *The word emet or truth is also in many cases translated with the word faithful. Truth refers to something that is accurate, real, factual. Faithful describes someone or something that is loyal, steadfast, and reliable in their actions. It implies consistency and unwavering commitment. Just as God and His Words are true, they are also faithful. How does the psalmist in 119 and other writers use the word to describe God and His words?*

Psalm 119:86

Psalm 119:90

Psalm 119:138

Psalm 33:4-5

Psalm 89:8

Psalm 89:33

7. *What two words are given in Psalm 119:89,142,152, and 160 (NAS) to describe the viability of God and His Word?*

8. *Describe how the following verses express that idea about God?*

Psalm 90:4

Psalm 93:2

Psalm 39:5

Isaiah 40:28

Isaiah 57:15

Deuteronomy 33:27

2 Peter 1:10-11

9. *How might the above identifications of the nature of God and His word (eternal, absolute truth, faithful, righteous...) influence your passion for Him as it did the psalmist?*

Prayer requests:

Group time notes:
