

Obey God's Word
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Turn in your Bibles to Psalm 119. We'll be looking at the first sixteen verses.

Owning a cookbook and USING a cookbook are two very different things!

- I don't understand why that cake tastes so bad...I OWN a cookbook!
- I don't understand why that soup tastes horrible...I read the recipe and picked out the parts that I thought would be good...of course I left out some things I didn't think would be important!

An unfollowed recipe can make for a bad tasting dish.

An unfollowed Bible WILL make for a struggle with sin.

Dr. R. A. Torrey said:

"Oh, you may talk about power, but if you neglect the one book that God has given you as the one instrument through which He imparts and exercises His power, you will not have it. Ninety-nine Christians in every hundred are merely playing at Bible study. And therefore, ninety-nine Christians in every hundred are mere weaklings when they might be giants, both in their Christian life and in their service."

Let's look at verses 1-3 of Psalm 119

1 Blessed are they whose ways are blameless,
who walk according to the law of the LORD.

2 Blessed are they who keep his statutes
and seek him with all their heart.

3 They do nothing wrong;
they walk in his ways.

- These first three verses remind us of the result of OBEYING God's Word: Those who do are BLESSED.
- These verses might remind you of a lesson we had a couple of weeks ago...remember Psalm 112 verse 1?

Psalm 112

1...Blessed is the man who fears the LORD,
who finds great delight in his commands.

- When the Psalmist uses terms like "blameless" and "they do nothing wrong" he doesn't mean SINLESS...there was only one sinless man, Jesus.
- What he DOES mean is that the person who lives "according to the law of the Lord" will not DELIBERATELY SIN.
- Verse 2 says it's not just about FOLLOWING RULES; it's about SEEKING HIM WITH ALL YOUR HEART!

Warren Wiersbe said...

Knowing and obeying God's Word will bring blessings to your life...But if God is to bless you, you must sincerely seek the Lord and not just study the Bible. It is not facts in the head but truth in the heart that makes you grow in the Lord.¹ You must also rejoice in God's Word, delight in it and meditate on it. Meditation is to your inner person what digestion is to your body.²

¹Wiersbe, W. W. (1997, c1991). *With the word Bible commentary* (Ps 119:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

- We have to LIVE the word!
- Look at verses 4 through 8:

4 You have laid down precepts
that are to be fully obeyed.

5 Oh, that my ways were steadfast
in obeying your decrees!

6 Then I would not be put to shame
when I consider all your commands.

7 I will praise you with an upright heart
as I learn your righteous laws.

8 I will obey your decrees;
do not utterly forsake me.

- Verse 4 takes us back to our earlier example of following a recipe or makes us think of a chemist who has to follow a formula. If you don't follow it exactly you won't get the result the creator had in mind.
- It tells us God's "precepts...are to be FULLY OBEYED."
- Has anyone heard of the term "SALAD BAR RELIGION"? What does it mean?
 - Picking and choosing religious beliefs, doctrines the way you would pick your favorite items on a salad bar.

Chuck Colson writes...

Gallup reports that 20 percent of born-again Christians believe in reincarnation and 26 percent in astrology. Forty-five percent of those George Barna classifies as born again believe that "if people are good enough they can earn a place in

²Wiersbe, W. W. (1997, c1991). *With the word Bible commentary* (Ps 119:9). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

heaven." And Wade Clark Roof in *Spiritual Marketplace* writes that half of born-again baby boomers believe all religions are "equally good and true," almost half have no involvement in a conservative Protestant church, and a quarter believe in communicating with the dead!

- If you go to a bookstore there are lots of books pushing this kind of CUSTOMIZED SPIRITUALITY
- Thinking about these kinds of books Larry Crabb wrote:

"We've trivialized God, Most of these books assume God is the butler who serves you for one reason to give you a happy life. We've turned Him into a divine Prozac."

- The verses we just read use language that make it clear that there is only ONE BOOK that is God's WORD to us...the Bible:
- Verse 6 reinforces this: "when I consider ALL your commands." (Emphasis mine)
- Verse 6 also reveals a reason some people don't enjoy God's Word
- It says if we are "steadfast in obeying" His "decrees" (v. 5) we will "not be put to shame when I consider all your commands." What does that mean?
 - God's word does SURGERY through our conscience when we are wrong

Hebrews 4:12 (New International Version)

12For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

The Life Application Study Bible:

"With the incisiveness of a surgeon's knife, God's Word reveals who we are and what we are not...It discerns what is within us, both good and evil. The demands of God's Word require decisions. We must not only listen to the Word; we must also let it shape our lives."

- As we move into this next section of verses, verse 9 poses a key question:

9 How can a young man keep his way pure?

By living according to your word.

- So let's look at the HOW of OBEYING GOD'S WORD in verse 10 – 16

10 I seek you with all my heart;

do not let me stray from your commands.

11 I have hidden your word in my heart

that I might not sin against you.

12 Praise be to you, O LORD;
teach me your decrees.

13 With my lips I recount
all the laws that come from your mouth.

14 I rejoice in following your statutes
as one rejoices in great riches.

15 I meditate on your precepts
and consider your ways.

16 I delight in your decrees;
I will not neglect your word.

- Get your pen out and let's just CIRCLE all the ACTION VERBS in each of these verses:
 - Verse 10: SEEK and STRAY
 - Verse 11: HIDDEN and SIN
 - Verse 12: PRAISE and TEACH
 - Verse 13: RECOUNT and COME (from God's mouth)
 - Verse 14: REJOICE and FOLLOWING
 - Verse 15: MEDITATE and CONSIDER
 - Verse 16: DELIGHT and NEGLECT

- Some of these verbs indicate what I WILL DO and what I WON'T DO:
 - If I SEEK then I won't STRAY
 - If I've HIDDEN then I won't SIN
 - If I DELIGHT then I won't NEGLECT
- Some of them show another CAUSE and EFFECT:
 - If I PRAISE God then He will TEACH me
 - If I REJOICE it will be in FOLLOWING
 - If I MEDITATE then I will CONSIDER (Remember a couple of weeks ago about meditation? If you can WORRY you can MEDITATE)
- And verse 13 COMMANDS us to RECOUNT with our LIPS the laws that COME from God's mouth.

- These ACTION WORDS give us some clues as to HOW we can TREASURE and OBEY God's Word.

- What is an ADAGE?
- Examples:
 - A stitch in time saves nine. - Fix the small problem now before it becomes larger and harder to fix.
 - Measure twice, cut once.
 - A dull pencil is greater than the sharpest memory.

- Don't make a mountain out of a molehill.
- Did your parent or boss or coach leave you with some adages or advice?
- When do those things come to mind for you?
- When we've been given ADVICE and WISDOM and INSTRUCTION from those we RESPECT it will come into our minds when we need it. It's almost like second nature.
- That's where verse 11 comes in:

11 I have hidden your word in my heart
that I might not sin against you.

- How do you "hide" something in you "heart"?
 - Memorize it...but it's MORE THAN THAT
 - I bet you memorized a lot of things in school to pass a test that you can't remember today to save your life.
 - I took two years of high school Spanish and I could speak a paragraph of Spanish if you put a gun to my head.
 - What do they say about "retaining" a foreign language? It's not enough to memorize it you have to USE IT!
- Anyone know the term "Muscle Memory"?
 - It applies to sports; playing a musical instrument; typing; driving; using a tool
 - One website describes it this way

The more often you do a certain activity, the more likely you are to do it as needed, when needed. If you've kicked thousands of field goals, exercise physiologists assume that the likelihood of being able to kick one during an American football game is pretty good through muscle memory. You don't have to think, "I need to make this kick." Your body already knows how to do it.

Most top level athletes and performers in a variety of fields believe that muscle memory is best developed when the same activities are practiced over and over again, with any corrections of form that are needed. Continual practice may mean you can make that perfect golf swing every single time (or almost), or hit a high note every time if you're a singer.

- Muscle Memory isn't just about MUSCLES it's about the connection from the BRAIN to the MUSCLES --- we've PROGRAMMED the MOTION for when we need it.
- Through HIDING GOD'S WORD IN OUR HEARTS we can develop MORAL MEMORY just like our bodies develop MUSCLE MEMORY
- Look at the word HIDDEN in verse 11; in some translations it's a different word...anyone know what it is?
 - Treasure
 - When you have something VALUABLE and DEAR TO YOU that you will NEED some day what do you do with it? Do you just leave it laying out in the front yard? You HIDE it under LOCK and KEY for SAFEKEEPING.

- This is why MEMORIZING SCRIPTURE and USING IT is important.
- Jesus was our best example of this. Look at Matthew 4:1-11.
- What story is this?
 - Temptation of Jesus
- Look at just the sentences in RED (assuming you have a RED LETTER EDITION). What words tell us Jesus knew God’s Word when He needed it?
 - “It is written...”
 - When Jesus was faced with the toughest temptation to sin what did He do?
 - We don’t read him saying... “Hang on Satan, I’ve got my King James in my pocket here...give me just a minute I know there’s something about that in here...flip, flip, flip. Man, I wish I had bought those tabs to stick on the pages to find things faster!”
 - He quoted God’s Word He had “hidden” in His heart.
 - By the way, who else quoted scripture in this story?
 - Satan...if he knows scripture (in order to TWIST IT) shouldn’t you and I know it CORRECTLY?
- The Bible shows us that Jesus quoted scripture multiple times in His ministry.
- Can you think of another very difficult moment when Jesus quoted scripture?

Psalm 22:1 (New International Version)

1 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? ...

Psalm 31:5 (New International Version)

5 Into your hands I commit my spirit;

Cliff Barrows said

When I was about 13 years of age and attending the Mt. Hermon Bible Conference in California, Dawson Trotman, the founder of The Navigators ministry, sat me down on a rock by a creek bed. He told me, "Cliff, the most important book in your life is the Bible. I want to encourage you to memorize it, to hide it in your heart. It will be the greatest source of strength, encouragement and help to you in every situation of your life, particularly in times of temptation." I have found this to be true; Dawson was so right.

- Some of you may say “I just can’t memorize scripture!”
- Granted, word for word memorization is easier for some folks than others
- However, if you can remember the words to all those 70’s tunes when you sing a long in the care (or 80’s and 90’s for you young pups in here!) you can memorize scripture!
- Now I would never encourage you to “cheat” on memorizing scripture. However, your teacher must confess that I use the CONCORDANCE in the back of my Bible a lot when I remember the ESSENCE or KEY WORDS in a verse but not the REFERENCE. That’s a good start at least...but if I’m without a Bible handy I’m stuck.
- Memorization is important to “hiding” God’s Word in our hearts. There’s lots of good advice on-line about how to do it.
- But it’s not just MEMORIZING

- And it's not EVEN JUST MEMORIZING AND USING
- If we want to really TREASURE God's Word in our HEARTS and MINDS it takes the WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

A.W. Tozer writes...

"Most of us are acquainted with churches that teach the Bible to their children from their tenderest years...(but) their members show no evidence of having passed from death unto life...The Scriptures, to be understood, must be read with the same Spirit that originally inspired them...The best a book can do is to give us the letter of truth. If we ever receive more than this, it must be by the Holy Spirit who gives it."

Pg. 129 (Best of Tozer)

- So HOW do we get that ENLIGHTENMENT of the Holy Spirit as we MEMORIZE and USE Scripture?
- Our prayer should be verse 18:

¹⁸ Open my eyes, so that I may behold
wondrous things out of your law.

Charles Spurgeon said,

"Texts will often refuse to reveal their treasures till you open them with the key of prayer." (Spurgeon, Lectures to My Students (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1990), 42.

So, what's the TAKEAWAY?

- It's been said "Dusty Bibles lead to dirty lives." If we want to KNOW God we have to SPEND TIME IN HIS WORD.
- We have to MEDITATE on it and ASK WHAT IT MEANS FOR US
- We need to PRAY for the Holy Spirit living in us to OPEN OUR EYES and reveal SUPERNATURALLY what God is telling us
- We need to HIDE IT IN OUR HEARTS by
 - Memorizing it
 - And USING it REGULARLY and REPEATEDLY

Quoting Tozer again, *"The Bible is not an end in itself, but a means to bring men to an intimate and satisfying knowledge of God, that they may enter into Him, that they may delight in His Presence, may taste and know the inner sweetness of the very God Himself in the core and center of their hearts."* (A. W. Tozer, The Pursuit of God (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1982), 10.