

PSALM 119

SESSION 1:

PSALM 119:1-16

Quick Start



READ

Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.



PRINT

Before meeting, make enough copies of this session's handout for your entire group. The handouts came with your download.



WATCH

Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

Note: For more detailed information, please see the How to Use The Leader's Guide document.

PSALM 119

OPEN

When you think back on your childhood, what is something you memorized that you still haven't forgotten? (ABCs, books of the Bible, multiplication tables, etc.)

What did you use to help with your memorization? (song, rhyme, anagram, etc.)

Odds are, you still remember this information today because you used something more than rote memory. There are all kinds of clever tools that help with retaining information we need to know. The same goes for the Bible and the chapter we will be studying together over the next ten weeks.

READ

Read Psalm 119:1–16.

VIEW

Show Session 1: *Psalm 119:1–16* (8:45 minutes)

DISCUSS

How familiar are you with Psalm 119?

What from Matt's session deepened your understanding of the background and content of the psalm?

Psalm 119 is an example of what is called an "alphabetic acrostic." Each stanza—made up of 8 verses—begins each line with the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet. For verses 1–8, every line begins with the letter "aleph," the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet. For verses 9–16, every line begins with the letter "beth," the second letter in the Hebrew alphabet. The psalm follows this structure for all twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This style of poetry was often utilized to help with effective memorization. Most English translations include headers above each 8-line stanza noting the Hebrew letter for that section.

Go Deeper

Learn more about the meditative culture of Old Testament Israel from the following passages:

Deut. 6:4–9; 17:14–20

What did God command each of Israel’s future kings to do when they came to power (see Deut. 17:18–20)? (They were to make a personal copy of the Law approved by the priesthood in order to remember the Word of the Lord.)

Who does Deuteronomy 6:4–9 address? (“Israel,” verse 1—in other words, everyone, whether it be the king or a normal citizen)

When are they commanded to “teach” and “talk” about God’s Word? (Throughout the entirety of their days, at all opportunities they had)

What do these passages indicate about the importance of repetition and remembrance for God’s people?

What are the two categories Matt splits verses 1–16 into? (He said verses 1–8 describe the blessed life while verses 9–16 express David’s desire to understand how to experience the blessed life.)

As Matt shared, many of us understand what God has called us to do, but we struggle with understanding how to fulfill the life He desires of us.

When you consider the phrase “blessed life” what comes to mind? What do you consider important elements of being blessed?

DUST OFF THE HEBREW

The term translated “blessed” in verses 1–2 comes from the Hebrew noun *ashray* and can also be translated “happy” or “happiness” depending on the context (see 1 Kings 10:8; 2 Chron. 9:7). Literally, the opening verse of Psalm 119 reads, “[Oh] the happiness of those who are blameless of way.” The term is used regularly throughout the psalms (1:1; 32:1; 40:5; 84:5; 106:3; 128:1; 144:15) and denotes more than simply a state of being blessed, but also the emotional quality that comes with knowing God and following His ways. David saw fit to open Psalm 119, which is focused on celebrating the value of God’s Word, by praising the blessed and happy life that comes from a commitment to the ways of the Lord.

If verses 1–8 describe the blessed life, what does David point out as marks of the blessed life?

Based on these verses, would you say you are living the blessed life today? Why or why not?

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What does verse 1 identify as a foundation for those who are blessed? (Blamelessness)

Are you blameless before God in terms of the way you have lived? Have you kept His Word with your whole heart?

Of course, the answer to these questions is “no” for all of us. Matt confessed himself that if blamelessness is the standard for a blessed life, then we have all fallen short. Because of this, we all share the same struggle—knowing what is required, yet finding ourselves unable to fulfill that requirement. As a result, our temptation is to hide that difficulty in order to appear strong and put together rather than honestly sharing our weaknesses with one another.

Matt explained that the ongoing ethic of the Christian life is not to hide our doubts, sin, and fears, but to bring them to light before God and Christian community. **How well do you practice this discipline?**

What motivates you to project strength and sufficiency? What fears do you have when it comes to being honest about your struggles?

These first two stanzas make it clear that the blessed life begins with a seriousness about God’s Word. Verse 9 explains that we keep our ways pure when we live in accordance to His Word.

What does it mean to guard our ways according to God’s Word?

What are some practical ways you practice that in your life? What are some ways you could be even more intentional about living in light of God’s Word?

Matt described Psalm 119 as a shadow of what has come in the person and work of Jesus Christ. We do not gain the blessed life through works of our own, but through the finished work of Jesus Christ, which is credited to us by faith. A disciplined reading of God’s Word will ultimately lead us to the Word made flesh—Jesus.

Go Deeper

Learn more about the blessing we receive through Jesus from the following passages:

Matt. 5:3–10; John 5:39; 6:28–29; 2 Cor. 5:21

How does Jesus describe the “blessed life”? What similarities or differences do you see between the Beatitudes and Psalm 119?

How does John 5:39 describe the Word of God? (As a means to an end, namely, that of Jesus Christ)

What does Jesus define as “the work of God” in John 6:29? (“That you believe in him whom he has sent”)

According to 2 Corinthians 5:21, how do we become “the righteousness of God”? (Through the substitutionary death and resurrection of Jesus Christ)

The “blessing” of God comes to us through faith in the perfect life, death, and resurrection of Jesus—not by any work of our own.

If we have any hope of growing in faith, we have to be honest about where we are today. As Matt shared, if blamelessness is a prerequisite for the blessed life, we have to acknowledge our guilt and surrender to the saving work of Jesus Christ.

What is holding you back from acknowledging the brokenness in your life?

What would change if you did?

When children first begin to walk, they will take a few steps and then inevitably fall. Nonetheless, loving parents pay little attention to their stumbles. Instead, they celebrate the steps, the progress of their child. Our Father in heaven sees us in the same way. He calls us to faithfulness and celebrates our steps in spite of our stumbles.

How should that truth about God’s character change the way you think about your own brokenness? In what ways does it encourage you toward greater boldness in confessing where you are weak?

LAST WORD

The only way we get anywhere in life is through an honest understanding of our starting point. This is just as true for road trips as it is for our relationship with Jesus Christ. He knows us better than we know ourselves so pretending to be something we are not is a futile effort.

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Faith means trusting in the promises of God, which are yours through belief in Christ. One of those promises is that there is no more condemnation for those who have believed in the death and resurrection of Jesus (Rom. 8:1). Faith is acting on that promise, confessing where you are today, and allowing God to cleanse you and lead you step by step into new life with Him. Act on that truth today believing that God delights in you even when you stumble.

LIVE IT OUT

Pray: Set aside some time this week to pray and ask that God would give you an accurate view of yourself so that you can move forward in genuine confession and repentance.

Confess: If the Holy Spirit has convicted you of any sin you have not confessed in your life, seek out a trusted believer this week and bring it to light. Invite them to carry the burden with you and ask them to help you walk in freedom.

Memorize: Select 2–3 verses from the passage we studied this week that encourage you to practice regular confession and repentance. Commit them to memory and ask God to call them to mind for you in times when you are tempted to hide from the truth.

Accountability: In addition to knowing our starting point, part of moving forward is staying on the right path, which often requires the help of others. This week, reach out to 2–3 trusted believers and begin a conversation with them about forming an accountability group in order to meet together for the sake of staying on the right path in pursuit of Christ.

Journal: Sometime this week, sit down and write out the characteristics that marked your life before you met Christ. Then write about how your life has been transformed since surrendering to Christ. Read over your notes and praise God for His grace to you.

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SESSION 2:

PSALM 119:17-32

Quick Start



READ

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PRINT

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OPEN

When was the last time you had great expectations about something that ended up letting you down? (new job, meeting someone you looked up to for the first time, a relationship, etc.)

What was the first sign that it would not measure up to your expectations? How did that make you feel?

We've all found ourselves in situations that started out hopeful and have come to leave us feeling disappointed and in need of rejuvenation. In today's session, David finds himself in a similar circumstance.

READ

Read Psalm 119:17—32.

WATCH

Show Session 2: 119:17—32 (12 minutes)

DISCUSS

This section of Psalm 119 begins with great expectations. Someone read verse 17.

What does David expect from God? (That He would deal bountifully with him)

How do you feel about this request? Do you ask and expect from God the same benevolence? Why or why not?

As Matt explained, we have a tendency to view this kind of rhetoric as the “prosperity gospel,” which basically holds that God will give us perfect health and sufficient wealth at all times through faith in Jesus Christ. Put simply, it's the belief that everything will go our way if we give our lives to Jesus.

What are some of the ways you have witnessed the prosperity gospel?

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What's wrong with the prosperity gospel? In what ways does it miss the point of the gospel of Jesus?

We could touch on a number of different ways in which the prosperity gospel perverts the gospel of Jesus Christ, but the main one is that it makes the Christian life focused primarily on self rather than Christ. It makes us primary rather than God and His glory. Yet, God tells us to pursue Him with the expectation of receiving His benevolence. Someone read Matthew 7:7–11.

How does this passage describe the heart of God? (He is a generous Father, even more so than the most generous earthly father.)

How should this passage inform our expectations in prayer? (We should go to God believing in His goodness and with expectation similar to David.)

Go Deeper

Learn more about the generosity of God from the following passages:

Matt. 7:7–11; Eph. 1:3–4 James 1:17; 4:2–3

What do these passages teach us about God's desire for His children? (He desires to give us good gifts and through Christ has blessed us with every spiritual blessing.)

According to James 1:17, where do all good gifts come from?

According to James 4:3, why does God sometimes say “no” to our prayers for blessing?

How do these passages create a biblical understanding of God's blessing in contrast to the prosperity gospel?

They teach us that God is a generous Father who delights in blessing His children with gifts. Though, sometimes we ask for His gifts from a selfish heart or we ask for what is actually destructive to us. Because God loves His children, He is faithful to deny such requests for the sake of our health.

What distinction does Matt make between the prosperity gospel and a biblical view of God's generosity?

According to the prosperity gospel, believing in Jesus means that God will give us all that we desire—health, wealth, and a comfortable life. A biblical view of God's generosity is that God will always give us what is good, even in the times when we fail to see His gifts for what they are. When we come to Him prayerfully with this kind of faith, we can ask for Him to deal “bountifully” with us and trust that His response will be good and generous no matter how we interpret His generosity.

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So this passage starts with a sense of expectation on the part of David, but quickly devolves into what Matt called “the first-fruits of uh-oh.” Someone read verses 18–24.

What are some words you would use to characterize David’s tone in these verses?

As Matt explained, they give us insight into the tension we all feel between following God’s Word and experiencing fallen humanity. Like David, we all find ourselves in circumstances where we ask, “Where is God in the middle of this?”

How have you experienced that tension between following God’s Word and dealing with a sinful world in your own life? What did your prayer life look like during those times?

As you reflect on those times, how did God respond to your circumstances? What have you learned about Him as a result of going through them?

Matt referred to these kinds of difficult times as the “fertile ground of revival.” When we face deep pain in our lives, we are far more open to God’s transforming work of breathing new life into us. If we are to experience the grace of God, we first have to recognize our need for it.

How does Matt describe the theme of verses 25–32? (They explain how David entered into the comfort of God’s presence and power.)

Someone read verse 26.

What action does David say he took in response to his circumstances? (Full confession)

How does God respond to him as a result?

Like Matt said, many times we are tempted to project an outward strength to cover up the secret sin and pain that we experience on the inside. The reality is that Scripture has already made known to us our need for a Savior. Even more, nothing is hidden from God.

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How have you practiced confession in your own life?

What were the practical effects you experienced after confessing sin? How did it influence your relationship with Christ? What about your witness to others?

In what ways do you practice confession today? What could you do to grow in that discipline in the days ahead?

We are all in need. The cross of Jesus Christ makes that abundantly clear. But His resurrection also provides us the hope of a new life, which is why confession is such an important part of our walk with Christ. It is an act of faith because it acknowledges that God knows our sin and that He has extended forgiveness through Jesus Christ. As we walk in this discipline, we grow in our confidence with Him. Someone read verses 27–32.

What is the consistent theme Matt points out about these verses? (They communicate a desire for *believing* as opposed to simply *knowing* God’s Word.)

What is the difference between belief and knowledge? (As Matt said, “To believe something is to be transformed by it.” Knowledge does not necessarily lead to transformation.)

Where are some areas in your life where you need God to move you from knowledge to belief?

It sounds counter-intuitive, but God is faithful to bring us to our wit’s end so that we might recognize our need for Him, confess the ways in which we have failed to believe that truth, and believe in Him all the more. The result of this, according to verse 32, is a deeper desire to follow His Word as He enlarges our hearts to do so.

DUST OFF THE HEBREW

In the original Hebrew, the phrase translated “when you enlarge my heart” literally means, “for you make wide my heart.” Throughout the Old Testament, the word for “heart” (*lev*) generally refers to more than the organ, but the seat of a person’s will and emotions. The verb *rachav* (“to make wide, extensive”) creates the image of God liberating a captive heart and releasing it to joy, confidence, and insight to walk in obedience to His Word. Verse 32 is constructed in a cause and effect structure, the first line describing the effect and the second line denoting the cause. This “widening” is a gift from God and one that creates a willing obedience rather than a begrudging submission to His ways.

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What obstacles stand in the way of you confessing your sin? (Fear, pride, bitterness, etc.)

How do they keep you from the comfort of God's presence and power?

How would your life look different if you were to act on the truth you've learned today?

LAST WORD

God is sovereign to use the challenging circumstances of our lives to draw us into confession of sin and to redirect us from whatever would distract our attention from Him. His Word is living, active, and written on our hearts through the Holy Spirit who lives within us.

So wherever you find yourself in need of rejuvenation today, confess that. Bring it before the Lord and ask for His help. Allow Him to comfort you by His presence and breathe new life into your weariness so that you might run all the more in obedience to His Word.

LIVE IT OUT

Pray: As you think about the areas of your spiritual life where you need to move from *knowing* to *believing*, invite God to bridge that gap and transform you in such a way that your life reflects what you claim to believe.

Study: Over the course of the next week, devote your quiet time to studying the generosity of God throughout Scripture. Find a handful of passages that describe God's generous heart in order to further shape your understanding of your Heavenly Father.

Confess: If you are hiding sin or keeping secret any doubts or fears you have about your spiritual life, seek out a trustworthy believer and confess those today. Trust that the truth of God's Word will not mislead you.

Ask: If you are in a season of need, boldly ask God to provide for your needs, like David in the passage we studied. Trust that He is a generous Father who gives good gifts and will provide you with whatever you need for sustenance.

Praise: As you reflect on the generosity of God in your life, spend some time each day this week praising God for His gifts to you.

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SESSION 3:

PSALM 119:33-48

Quick Start



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OPEN

What is something that you've been responsible for growing in your life? (plant, company, physical strength, etc.)

What did you do to contribute to the growth? What else was required to accomplish the growth?

In every situation, we require more than ourselves for growth. For a company to grow, it needs strong leadership, but also buy-in from employees. Plants need people to water them, but they also need good soil for seeding. Physical strength requires personal discipline, but also guidance from the outside on best practices for growing strong. The same is true for our spiritual life. To grow into maturity, we need God to meet us in our need, which is what we're going to see in our session today.

READ

Read 119:33–48.

WATCH

Show Session 3: 119:33–48 (15:30 minutes)

DISCUSS

Matt began this session observing how verses 33–48 illustrate a cause and effect in King David's prayer life. In verses 33–40, we read the desires of David's heart, specifically what he desires the Lord to bring about in his life. Then, in verses 41–48 we see the fruit of David's prayers.

How have you seen that cause and effect in your own life? What have you asked for and seen God provide in response?

What are you asking God to do in your life today?

As we've said from the start, this psalm centers on the importance of God's Word in the lives of His people. And what we see in the first eight verses we're studying in this session is an increasing awareness of our need for God to transform our posture toward His Word. Verse 33 begins with David asking the Lord to help him remain obedient to the end—a prayer we can all relate to.

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As you compare your life before Christ and your life after coming to know Him, how has your perspective changed toward God's Word?

In what ways have you grown more disciplined in "keeping" His Word? Where do you find yourself struggling with consistency?

A lot of times, our temptation is to pursue perfectionism believing our obedience will earn more of God's favor, but David makes it clear here that God is the one who supplies us with the ability to obey. Even more, God leads us out of a compartmentalized life and into wholehearted obedience.

Matt observed that all of us could confess ways in which our obedience to God is half-hearted. **What are some areas in your life where you find full obedience most difficult?**

What are some of the factors blocking that obedience? (Fear, pride, lack of understanding, etc.)

DUST OFF THE HEBREW

The Hebrew term for "heart" is *lev*, which carries a much broader meaning than our English concept. While at times, it refers to the bodily organ (1 Sam. 25:37; 2 Kings 9:24; Ps. 39:4), it far more often appears describing the whole of one's inner life. It's the same term used in Deuteronomy 6:5—"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." Interestingly, when Jesus quoted the commandment He included "mind" as one of the ways in which we are called to love God (Matt. 22:37). In Psalm 119:34, *lev* clearly encompasses all aspects of one's inner life (mind, will, emotion, etc.) due to David's request for "understanding" in order to obey. Obedience to God is more than simply knowing the right answers. It is a heartfelt, willful action in response to that knowledge—one brought about by the grace of God.

Like Matt said, we're not to be lazy about our obedience, but the reality is that true obedience requires the transformative power of God. **Having watched this session, has the Holy Spirit convicted you of any ways that you are trying to obey apart from God's transforming power? How would your efforts change if you asked God to change your heart?**

What can you do practically over the next week to plead with God to change your heart the way David does in these verses?

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How would your life look different if God created in you wholehearted obedience?

David goes on to a further aspect of commitment to God's Word, namely, that of desire. God desires more than our begrudging obedience. To wholeheartedly follow His Word means to see the goodness of God through His commands.

How do you tend to respond to someone telling you what to do?

How is that response reflected in the way you tend to react to the commands in the Bible? In what ways does it affect how you see the heart of God behind His commands?

Someone read Psalm 34:8. In context, David is writing about the faithfulness of God to those who fear Him.

What does David say we find out about God when we “taste” of His ways? (He is good.)

In other words, David is encouraging us to pursue obedience to God because in doing so we will come to see Him as good. Following Him allows us to grow in our intimacy with Him, which broadens our view of His goodness to us.

How have you experienced God's goodness in your obedience to Him? How has God shown Himself as kind and gracious to you?

How should that change the way you approach His commands? Or to put it another way, how should it cause you to trust in the goodness of God's commands going forward?

Verses 36–37 ask for the Lord to bring about two similar ends. David prays that God would cause him to hate selfish gain and turn his eyes from worthless things so that it would grant him the freedom to pursue God's ways.

As Matt shared, all of us have to contend with the temptation toward using what God has given for selfish gain. **What do you find yourself most tempted to use for your own purposes rather than in service to the Lord?** (money, time, influence, etc.)

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What would it look like to devote that resource more fully toward God's purposes? What would need to change about your life currently?

Hating selfish gain requires God to transform us so that we turn away from dwelling on what is worthless, which is where David focuses his attention in verse 37.

What are some of the "worthless things" we pursue instead of chasing after the things of God? (sex, wealth, fame, etc.)

How do those distractions keep us from displaying Christ to a lost world? In what ways do they weaken our witness?

Someone read Philippians 4:8.

Where does Paul say to fix our perspective? (On whatever is honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, and of excellence)

What kind of difference do you think this perspective would make in your life? (increased joy, less cynicism, a greater focus on God, etc.)

Like Matt pointed out, everything David has requested up to this point requires a work of God from within. The same is true for us. If we hope for any external change, we need the Lord to transform us from the inside out, which begins with the fear of God.

How did Matt describe the experience of fearing God? (Realizing that He is big and we are small)

How have you experienced the fear of God in your own life? In what ways did it affect you?

Go Deeper

Learn more about a biblical view of fearing God from the following passages:
Prov. 1:7; Matt. 10:28; Heb. 12:5–11, 28–29

Compare Matthew 10:28 to Hebrews 12:28–29. How does Matthew describe the fear of God for unbelievers in contrast to the fear of God for believers in the book of Hebrews? (For unbelievers, the fear of God is terror because they stand under His judgment. For believers, the fear of God is a reverential awe that motivates us to pursue obedience to Him as a result of receiving His loving kindness.)

What does the fear of God produce according to Proverbs 1:7? (Knowledge. The beginning of all true understanding comes from a right understand of God and our position before Him.)

In 2 Corinthians 7:1, what does Paul describe as fruits of fearing God? (Cleansing and a pursuit of holiness)

How do these truths deepen your understanding about what it means to fear God?

Whereas verses 33–40 focus on David’s requests, Matt explained that verses 41–48 gives us insight into what happens when God answers those prayers.

What were the two fruits Matt keyed in on as results of David’s prayers?

1. We are liberated from the fear of others
2. We walk with Christ in certainty

Someone read verses 41–46.

How do these verses demonstrate a freedom from the fear of what others think?

Matt explained that one of the primary roots of this fear is a deeper fear of being rejected. It’s especially so for those of us who struggle with perfectionism. **How have you dealt with a fear of rejection in your own life?**

Through faith in Jesus Christ, God doesn’t simply like us—He adopts us as His children, members of His family. We belong to Him and He becomes our hope. **How should this truth inform our penchant for perfectionism? How should it confront our fears?**

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Where are you in need of God to supply you with boldness to overcome your fears?

Someone read verses 46–48.

How do these verses demonstrate a confident walk with Christ?

Like Matt observed, in today's culture we are far more comfortable with doubt than we are with certainty, especially when it comes to the topic of faith. **In what ways do you experience doubt? How do you respond to the doubts in your life?**

We belong to a loving Father who desires that we come to Him with our doubts. Experiencing doubt is not a sin, but it does present a choice of whether we will turn to God for confidence or away from Him in fear. **Where do you need God to create confidence in you today?**

Through our faith in Jesus Christ, we find an answer to the prayers David writes throughout these verses. We also experience the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who continues to lead us into truth. Let's close by reading Mark 9:21–24.

What does the father ask of Jesus in verse 24? (To help his unbelief)

How should this prayer change the way you approach God with your doubts and fears?

LAST WORD

Having a confident faith does not mean knowing all the answers. Rather, it means trusting that God Himself is a sufficient answer in the midst of any question we may have. As we experience doubt and difficulty, God invites us to cry out to Him for help, as He is faithful to respond like the loving Father that He is.

If you're struggling with doubt today, invite God into your questions. Ask Him to create confidence where you need it and teach you how to walk in freedom from the fear of others. We serve a caring Father who desires to give us good gifts. Act on that truth today.

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LIVE IT OUT

Pray: Each day this week, pray the prayer of the father in Mark 9:24 and trust that God will help your unbelief.

List: Write down at least 2–3 specific items you are asking God to accomplish in your life. Place them somewhere that you will regularly see them in order to pray daily over them and rejoice when God responds to your prayers.

Reflect: Take some time this week to reflect on your life before Christ and how He has transformed you since. Be encouraged by the work He has done in you and allow the Holy Spirit to minister to your heart as you resolve to pursue Christ.

Give: Recall whatever you identified as the thing you're most tempted to use for your own purposes rather than in service to the Lord (money, time, influence, etc.). Find a practical way this week to intentionally devote a portion of that in service to God and as a blessing to those around you.

Draw: If you have a creative leaning, draw an image of what you believe best pictures a biblical fear of God. Hang the image in a place for you to see it daily so that you can be reminded of the freedom that comes with fearing the Lord.

PSALM 119

SESSION 4:

PSALM 119:49-64

Quick Start



READ

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WATCH

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OPEN

Describe a time when you found the courage to face something difficult or scary because of the assurance of someone with you (a parent teaching you to swim, helping you ride a bike, learning to drive, etc.).

Why did you believe in their assurance? What made them trustworthy to you?

How did their encouragement give you the courage to take that risk?

Throughout life, there will be times when we will face difficulty. During those seasons, it may even be difficult to see God in the midst of the pain. When those times come, we can find great comfort in the assured promises of God, which is where we want to focus our time today.

READ

Read 119:49–64.

WATCH

Show Session 4: *Psalm 119:49–64* (12:30 minutes)

DISCUSS

We live in a Genesis 3 world, which is to say we live in a broken world. Life does not function the way God intended from the beginning and because of that we experience suffering.

What were the three causes Matt gave for suffering?

1. The fallenness of our world
2. The sin of others
3. Our own sin

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How have you experienced suffering in your own life?

How do you tend to respond to suffering? What do you turn to for comfort and support?

As we know from Psalm 119, David was experiencing oppression and slander from those around him. He suffered like the rest of us and wrote about where he turned for comfort and support, which is important for us because his answers are true for us today as well.

Someone re-read verse 50. Matt first pointed out that we find comfort in the promises of God. **When you hear that phrase—the promises of God—what comes to mind?**

What are some biblical promises that stand out to you? Why?

Go Deeper

Learn more about God's promises to His people from the following passages:

John 4:14; 14:2–3; Rom. 8:1; 2 Cor. 5:17; Phil. 1:6; 4:6–7

What do these passage promise to those who believe in Christ? (Sustenance, an eternal home, freedom from condemnation, new life, completion, and peace that surpasses all understanding)

What are some of the obstacles that cause you to lose sight of these promises?

How are you in need of encouragement today? In what ways do these promises breathe life into the areas where you feel weak?

What can you do practically in the coming days to anchor yourself in these promises, which are yours through faith in Jesus?

How should the promises of God reshape the way you respond to times of suffering?

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Matt described the promises of God as a “warm blanket for a weary soul.” During his journey through chemotherapy, he focused on biblical promises as light in his darkness. They continually remind us of the future that awaits us, but they are not the only source David describes as offering comfort.

DUST OFF THE HEBREW

The verb *chaya*, meaning, “to be alive” is used 16 times throughout Psalm 119—the majority of them referring to spiritual life (vs. 25, 50, 93, 107). In verse 50, the verb is constructed in a way that intensifies the action and is sometimes translated “revives me” to reflect this intensity. According to David, the promises of God are a “comfort” to him in times of affliction because they revive his weary and deadened soul. This truth echoes throughout the whole counsel of Scripture and remains a comfort to us today. Through faith in Jesus Christ, we receive the promises of God as comforts that revive us in our affliction.

What did Matt identify as a second source of comfort from verse 57? (The nearness or presence of God)

One of the lies we often believe is that giving our lives to Jesus will lead to a comfortable life. Yet, nearly every book of the New Testament promises that those who follow Christ will experience suffering. As Matt said, the true gift of our faith in Jesus is that we get God and He is enough regardless of life’s circumstances.

How have you experienced suffering as a result of your faith in Jesus?

How did you experience the presence of God in those times? In what ways did you receive peace and comfort as a result?

How have you found God’s presence to be a sufficient “portion” in difficult times?

If God Himself is our portion, then so are all of His attributes, which is where David turns in verse 58 by asking that the Lord extend to him favor and grace. In the same way, those who are in Christ enjoy not only the presence of God, but also His character, especially that of His grace.

How would you define grace? (Unmerited favor)

PSALM 119

As Matt explained, through faith in Christ we are reconciled to God by His grace. Our salvation is not dependent on our own works, but upon the grace of God extended to us in Christ. His grace is unchanging, constant, and redefines all that we experience in life.

What should change about our view of suffering as recipients of God's grace? (God does not intend suffering for our punishment, but allows it in the same way that a surgeon wounds for the sake of removing what would ultimately harm us.)

What would look different about your response to suffering if you were able to fix yourself continually on the truth that God is good to you in the midst of it?

In addition to God's grace, we also receive His testimonies. Typically, the term "testimony" used in this context refers to God's instruction, meaning the Old Testament Law. But as Matt pointed out, it highlights for us the truth of God's sovereign work within human affairs and we see that story played out through the stories of many important figures throughout the Bible.

What did Matt describe as "the story of the Bible"? (It is the story of God working in the mess.)

When you think about the stories within the Bible, what are some examples that demonstrate God at work in the hurt, pain, and sorrow of humanity?

What attributes of God do they illustrate?

Leader: Answers to this question can vary (power, sovereignty, mercy, etc.), but be sure to lead them to the recognition that the stories of the Bible demonstrate for us all what King David has listed as his comforts up to this point. They reveal God's presence among His people, His grace extended, and the trustworthiness of His promises.

The stories of the Bible also mature our perspective on suffering. **If people like Moses, David, and even Jesus were not exempt from suffering, how should that cause us to prioritize our comfort?**

With God as our portion, we enjoy His constant presence, His grace, and His testimonies, but we also receive the invitation to approach Him at any time. In fact, He tells us to come to Him with our needs for He is willing and ready to provide. David points out two crucial provisions in verses 62–63, the first of which is that God is always available to us even in the dark

PSALM 119

hours of the night.

How should the truth of God's constant availability encourage us in times of darkness?

Jesus says in Matthew 11:28, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." **In the weeks ahead, what can you do to be more proactive about running to God in times of weakness, failure, and suffering?**

In addition to the nearness of God, David also touches on God's provision of companions who will walk alongside of us. Let's look back at verse 63.

How have you found the companionship of other believers to be a comfort to you in difficult periods of life?

Do you have that kind of community today? Why or why not?

Who could you invite into your life to help you carry whatever pain and loss you may be experiencing?

LAST WORD

If you're struggling or hurting today, don't suffer alone. Devote yourself to cultivating a heart and mind that embraces the promises of God as true for you in Christ. He is near to the broken hearted and desires to give rest.

He has also created a common fellowship across the body of Christ. As believers, we are called to bear one another's burdens and that can only begin when we are honest about the things that burden us. Ask God to open your eyes to the trustworthy believers He has placed around you and invite them into your pain and loss. God is faithful to provide for us and carry us through trial no matter how difficult it may seem.

PSALM 119

LIVE IT OUT

Pray: Whatever pain or struggle you are feeling today, spend some time each day this week confessing it to God and asking for Him to meet you in your need.

Resolve: Whether you are in a season of struggle or one of comfort, resolve to face times of difficulty with confidence that God is at work in the mess.

Memorize: Select 2–3 of the biblical promises mentioned in the session and devote those passages to memory. Ask that God would comfort you with them in times of trial.

Encourage: If you know someone who is struggling, reach out to them and encourage them with the promises of God. Schedule a time to get coffee or take them to lunch and be intentional about offering them refreshment through the truth of Christ.

Invite: Be proactive about seeking community this week. Invite trusted believers into whatever pain, hurt, or doubt you are experiencing and allow them to help you bear that burden.

PSALM 119

SESSION 5:

PSALM 119:65-96

Quick Start



READ

Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.



PRINT

Before meeting, make enough copies of this session's handout for your entire group. The handouts came with your download.



WATCH

Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

Note: For more detailed information, please see the How to Use The Leader's Guide document.

PSALM 119

OPEN

What experience have you had with surgery? What was the purpose of the surgery?

How long was your recovery?

In what ways did the surgery benefit you in the long term?

Surgery always requires a doctor to inflict harm in order to create long-term health. Yet, the doctor is not considered cruel. Rather, he or she is committed to removing what would ultimately threaten the livelihood of a patient. God acts in much the same way in our lives, as we'll see in today's session.

READ

Read 119:65–96.

WATCH

Show Session 5: *Psalm 119:65–96* (17 minutes)

DISCUSS

One of the popular modern criticisms of the Christian faith is that it is a killjoy. Many unbelievers see it as something that steals joy rather than conferring it. While some of that criticism may be merited due to the behavior of Christians from time to time, it misses the true benefits of a relationship with Jesus Christ, which is what we will focus our time on today.

How did Matt describe the theme of this portion of Psalm 119? (It describes the benefits that come with a life that is fully surrendered to God.)

PSALM 119

What are the five benefits described by David in this passage?

1. God redeems our suffering for spiritual surgery
2. We learn our purposeful design in God's mission
3. We receive God Himself and all His attributes
4. We embrace an unshakeable hope
5. We experience repeated rejuvenation

Someone read verses 65–72. Throughout this passage, David repeatedly describes the Lord as “good” and having dealt well with him. **As you think on your relationship with Christ, how has He been good to you? What have you found to be the benefits of knowing Him?**

As Matt pointed out, it's important to see that the context of these statements involves the personal suffering David experienced. Verses 67, 69, and 71 indicate various forms of pain for which David praises God because of their benefit to his soul.

According to these verses, what is the spiritual benefit of suffering for believers in Jesus Christ? (In David's words, suffering caused him to “learn [God's] statutes.”)

What did Matt mean when he said “God does not drive an ambulance”? (Our suffering does not surprise God. He never arrives after the fact to pick up the pieces.)

How does the idea of God as a “surgeon” strike you? In what ways does it reshape the way He can use the suffering you experience for good?

Take a minute to reflect on your relationship with Christ. **How has God used suffering in your life to draw you into a deeper relationship with Him? What has He taught you during those times?**

PSALM 119

Go Deeper

Learn more about God's purposes in our suffering from the following passages:

Matt. 5:1–12 Cor. 12:1–10; Rom. 8:29; James 1:2–4

According to these passages, what are some of the fruits of suffering in the Christian life? (Blessedness, God's grace, and steadfastness)

What is the consistent comfort for those suffering in these passages? (That God is at work within our suffering, even if we experience no relief)

How is this view of suffering different from the world's?

The world's view of suffering tends to draw one of two conclusions about suffering: either it is embraced for the sake of self-empowerment or it is seen as meaningless. The Christian faith concludes the opposite of both. According to Scripture, God allows suffering to remind us of our need for Him and that He is present with us always working within the mess.

Everyone in life suffers, but what sets Christians apart in the way they are to view suffering? (Matt described it as the recognition that God is at work and that one day our suffering will cease when we enter into glory with Him.)

A life fully surrendered to God reorients the way we view suffering. It also opens our eyes to how God designed us to participate in His mission of redemption throughout the world. Someone read verses 73–80.

According to verse 73, who “makes” and “fashions” us?

DUST OFF THE HEBREW

The verb translated “fashioned” (*kun*) appears here in a form that can also be translated “established,” “set up to last,” or “fixed solidly.” David is attempting to communicate the fact that God has created him in a form meant to endure in a particular way, but he requires divine revelation in order to walk in obedience. The same Hebrew phrase appears in Deuteronomy 32:6 describing God as a father who “made and established” Israel, which broadens the sense of the image prior to its appearance in Psalm 119. God has made and established each of us to walk in obedience to Him and He has revealed Himself and His ways through His Word, which makes it worthy of both praise and close study.

PSALM 119

What does David ask of God as a result of his declaration? (For understanding to learn God's commandments)

So there's a textual connection between God's design and our purpose. The Holy Spirit opens our eyes to the truth of God's handiwork and gives us a right understanding of our purposes in His mission based on that design, which includes both our physical bodies and our internal personalities.

What are some of the unique qualities God has given to you?

How has He presented you with opportunities to use those qualities for His glory?

How should this understanding—that God has designed each of us specifically and uniquely—reorient the ways in which we think about ourselves (body image, personality, intelligence, etc.)?

Not only does a life surrendered to God redeem our experience with suffering, it also opens our eyes to the purposeful role God desires for us to play in His redeeming work. In addition to these, David draws our attention to perhaps the greatest benefit of all—God Himself. Someone read verses 73–80.

We've talked in previous sessions about God being the true treasure of our faith, but by receiving God we also receive His attributes. **As you read through this passage, what attributes of God do you see David list?** (righteousness, faithfulness, steadfast love, mercy, justice)

Which attribute stands out to you the most? How have you experienced it in your own life?

In addition to receiving God's personal attributes, we are also invited into the believing community of the Church, the body of Christ. **How has belonging to a community of believers deepened your walk with Christ? What are the benefits of authentic relationships with other believers?**

The final two benefits Matt mentioned go hand in hand. Through faith in Jesus Christ, we are brought into a relationship with Him that provides an unshakeable hope that regularly rejuvenates our weary souls. Someone read verses 81–88.

PSALM 119

How do these verses demonstrate David's hope in God through His Word?

How have you experienced hope in times of difficulty and uncertainty? How do those past experiences help to strengthen your hope today?

What did Matt point to as the assurance of our hope? (God's long history of faithfulness to His people, culminating in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ)

Now, someone read verses 89–96.

Which of these verses stands out to you as demonstrating David's rejuvenation through God's Word?

Matt said that the soul that does not trust in God can drown and become easily overwhelmed, but for those who have trusted in Christ we remain held and protected by the God of the universe. **What are some of the ways you have experienced God's rejuvenating work in your life?**

What are some passages of Scripture that refresh your heart?

How should the truth that the rejuvenating power of God is inexhaustible impact the way you pursue Him going forward?

LAST WORD

We will all face times of difficulty and suffering in our lives. It's an inescapable part of living in a fallen world, but when we believe in Christ our hope is set on God who exists beyond the world and the circumstances we face. That hope keeps us buoyant no matter how high the waters of life rise.

God's Word is a continual reminder of God's faithfulness to His people. It tells the story of His redemptive work across time and invites us to participate as both recipients and witnesses of His redemption. Turn to Him for refreshment and allow Him to rejuvenate your heart through the truths He has revealed in Scripture.

PSALM 119

LIVE IT OUT

Pray: Each day this week, make it a point to ask that God would use the circumstances of your life to create in you a greater dependence upon Him.

Write: On a single page of paper, write down the five benefits Matt listed that come from a life surrendered to God. Select the one you'd most like to grow in and spend some time each day this week asking God to mature you in that area.

Connect: Reach out to a believer who exhibits greater maturity in the "benefit" you'd like to grow in. Schedule some time to get together and talk with him or her about how God has matured them in that area of their spiritual journey.

Listen: Make time to meet with a believer you know that has experienced suffering and found deeper intimacy with God as result. Ask him or her about that process as well as how to trust God in the midst of difficulty.

List: Write out a list of the unique gifts God has given to you. Underneath each one, write 2–3 ways you could use that gift to serve someone in your life. Pick one of those opportunities for service and act on it at some point over the next week.

PSALM 119

SESSION 6:

PSALM 119:97-120

Quick Start



READ

Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.



PRINT

Before meeting, make enough copies of this session's handout for your entire group. The handouts came with your download.



WATCH

Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

Note: For more detailed information, please see the How to Use The Leader's Guide document.

PSALM 119

OPEN

What is your favorite food?

What was it like the first time you had it? What keeps you coming back for more of it today?

We all have different appetites, but we can all relate to tasting something delicious and craving it again at a later date. David describes the Word of God in these terms in our session today, likening it to sweet honey in his mouth. We're going to spend our time focusing on what it means to develop a consistent appetite for God's Word.

READ

Read 119:97-120.

WATCH

Show Session 6: *Psalm 119:97-120* (19 minutes)

DISCUSS

Sometimes when we read the Bible, we don't take the time to try and relate to the people described throughout. But like Matt said, David provides a relatable model in this psalm and others due to his honesty about the constant ebb and flow that we see in his relationship with God.

What are some of the ways you have been able to relate to David throughout this study?

Our walk with Christ is a journey that comes with highs and lows. As Matt has said previously, all of us will experience suffering along the way, though Christ remains present with us always. **How would you describe your relationship with Christ today? How do the verses we're studying in this session encourage you to be honest with the Lord about your circumstances?**

PSALM 119

What did Matt say was the theme of this session? (Being near to God sustains us and creates the fruit of a life committed to His Word.)

Someone read verses 97–104.

This stanza begins with David describing his consuming love for God’s Word. He describes it as his “meditation all the day,” meaning as he goes about his kingly duties day to day he’s constantly thinking on the Word of God. Then, in the following verses, he explains what fuels that love.

Who have you known to have a similar love for God’s Word?

Would you describe yourself as having this level of love for God’s Word? Why or why not?

What would change about the way you go about your life if God’s Word became your “meditation all the day” the way it was for David?

Beginning in verse 100, David begins to explain what sustains his love for God’s Word and how it influences his daily life.

In verses 100–104, what does David say he has gained from God’s Word? (Understanding)

How does he gain this understanding? (By studying and meditating on God’s Word)

One of the fruits of remaining near to God by abiding in His Word is a growing understanding of what is good and what is false. But this growth doesn’t simply happen by itself. We have to be intentional about pursuing it.

PSALM 119

Go Deeper

Learn more about what forms our lives from the following passage:

Rom. 12:2

What are the two options listed by the passage that influence our formation in life? (We are either being “conformed” to the world or “transformed” by the renewing of our minds.)

In other words, there is no such thing as neutrality in life. One way or another, we are either growing into the image of the world or we are being renewed to live in obedience to God. We are being disciplined by something at all times.

What does the transformation of a renewed mind produce? (The ability to test and discern the will of God)

How does the truth of this verse cause you to think more seriously about what you allow to influence you in life? What changes should you make as a result?

Like Matt said, David isn’t putting down the importance of learning within community. We should seek out teachers to help us better understand God’s Word, but we must also be committed to a personal devotion to Scripture under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

In verse 103, David describes God’s Word as “honey to my mouth.” **What word/phrase would you use to describe your feelings toward the Bible? Do you share a similar appetite for Scripture? Why or why not?**

What do you find most challenging about a personal study of God’s Word?

How have you seen God’s Word deepen your understanding throughout your walk with Christ? How has it changed your ability to see what is good and what is false?

Based on your current routines, what are some of the intentional ways you attempt to grow in your understanding through Scripture? What could you do to be more intentional in the weeks ahead?

God’s Word is more than simply words recorded on a page. It is living and active, deepening our understanding of the heart of God, and teaching us how to live wisely. It also sustains us in times of difficulty and uncertainty. Someone read verses 105–112.

PSALM 119

What are the three ways Matt explained that God’s Word sustains us from this passage?

1. It offers clarity to our uncertainty
2. It gives us hope in our suffering
3. It cultivate joy rather than merely happiness

How has God’s Word been a “lamp” for you the way David describes in verse 105? How did it provide clarity in a time of uncertainty?

How have you received hope from God’s Word during a season of suffering?

What did you learn about God as a result of these times?

By clinging to God’s Word, we draw near to God Himself who sustains us and brings forth fruit from our lives for the sake of His glory. One of those fruits is a joy that reaches beyond our circumstances.

According to Matt’s explanation in the session, what is the difference between joy and happiness? (Happiness is determined by life’s circumstances, meaning it can be taken away. Joy is rooted in God Himself, meaning it transcends circumstances and cannot be taken away.)

What does David describe as the source of his joy in verse 111? (His heritage in the testimonies of God)

As we’ve seen in earlier sessions, God’s ways and thoughts are higher than ours, which means that sometimes He will work in ways that seem inconvenient to us. At times, what we believe is good may in fact be a distraction, one God is faithful to keep us from. So while Scripture encourages us to approach God with confidence, we must also hold our lives with an open-handedness.

How did you react to Matt’s comments about living with an open hand on your life?

PSALM 119

What does it mean to live with an “open-handedness”?

What are some areas of your life where you struggle to live with this kind of open-handedness? How would your life look different if you were able to?

While it is important for believers to cultivate a discipline of studying God’s Word, we must never fall into treating it as an end in and of itself. The goal of Scripture is to point beyond itself, namely, to the person and work of Jesus Christ. Someone read verses 113–120.

According to verse 114, who is David’s “hiding place” and “shield”?

DUST OFF THE HEBREW

David commonly uses the terms *sater* (“hiding place”) and *magayn* (“shield”) throughout the psalms to describe the protective care of God (3:3; 18:3; 27:5; 28:7; 33:2; 37:5; 61:5). Connected with verse 113, David creates a vivid picture of the personal proximity of God to those committed to His Word. *Sater* can be similarly translated as “shelter” or “refuge” describing a place of safety. *Magayn* carries a more outward sense picturing a shield as a metaphor for God’s commitment to defend His people. With these verse, David reminds us that Scripture leads us beyond itself to God Himself who is a place of safety and a source of defense for those who value His Word.

Someone read John 5:39–40.

Who does Jesus say the Scriptures bear witness to? What does that mean for our understanding of the Bible?

As David says in this passage, Scripture has led him to a personal relationship with God by trusting in His promises revealed in His Word. For us today, Jesus Christ is the living Word and the goal of the Bible is to introduce us to our God who saves us and redeems us by faith in His Son.

How should this truth change your approach to Scripture? In what ways should it encourage your time in the Word knowing that it is drawing you deeper into a relationship with God?

God’s Word leads us into greater intimacy with Christ, but it also teaches us to fear God—a topic many find both unsettling and confusing today.

PSALM 119

How do you tend to react to the idea of “fearing” God? What does that look like for you?

In what ways did Matt’s explanation change your views?

What did he say were the benefits of this kind of good fear? (A holy worship and a commitment to obedience)

How would your life look different if you were to walk in a biblical fear of God? How will you pursue that end in the days ahead?

LAST WORD

The Word of God is sustenance for our appetites and a guiding light when we are in need of wisdom. But most importantly, it is a means to an end, namely, that of a relationship with Jesus Christ. Through Scripture, God reveals Himself to us and we grow in intimacy with Him by deepening our understanding of His ways.

If you struggle with a consistent study of God’s Word, perhaps it is because you have lost sight of its purpose of drawing you closer to your Savior and conforming you more fully to His image. Ask God to recreate in you a joy for His Word and trust Him to lead you in faithful obedience.

LIVE IT OUT

Pray: Each day this week, ask God to deepen your love for His Word and cause you to grow closer to Christ as a result.

Evaluate: Take inventory of your attitude toward God’s Word and evaluate whether or not you have the same affection as David describes throughout Psalm 119. Ask God to create a love within you for His Word wherever needed.

Surrender: If the Holy Spirit has convicted you of any areas of your life where you are not living with an open hand, surrender those to the Lord today and trust Him to be sufficient for you.

Ask: If you struggle with understanding how to study and meditate on Scripture, reach out to a believer you know who practices this discipline well and ask him or her to teach you.

Serve: If studying God’s Word is something you do well, look for ways to help those who struggle grow in their ability to study and understand Scripture.

PSALM 119

SESSION 7:

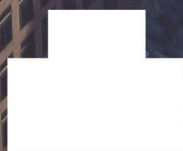
PSALM 119:121-136

Quick Start



READ

Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.



PRINT

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WATCH

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Note: For more detailed information, please see the How to Use The Leader's Guide document.

PSALM 119

OPEN

Have you ever been so excited about something that you couldn't resist telling someone about it right away? (an acceptance letter for college, a positive pregnancy test, a clear medical examination, etc.)

What caused your excitement? How did it feel to share it with someone else?

In today's session, we're going to take a look at David's desire to see the lost world around him embrace the Lord. Having come to know God, David longs for others to know that good news. We'll spend our time today talking about how God's grace is not meant to stop with us, but He intends for it to overflow from our lives to influence those around us.

READ

Read 119:121-136.

WATCH

Show Session 7: Psalm 119:121-136 (8:45 minutes)

DISCUSS

Now that we're a little over halfway through this series, let's start off our time this week with a refresher on what we know about Psalm 119.

Who is its author? (King David)

What is the theme of the psalm? (The importance of keeping God's Word primary in our lives)

What makes it unique to the rest of the psalms? (It's the longest chapter in the Bible, but it's also an alphabet acrostic where the first line of every 8-line stanza begins with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet.)

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In this session, we're going to meet David in a dark time as he describes the difficulties facing him, but we're also going to see him model for us a healthy way of responding during those times. Someone read verses 121–128.

How does David describe himself in verses 122, 124, and 125? (A “servant” of God)

How does David describe the world around him (vs. 121–122, 126)? (Oppressive, insolent, and disobedient to God’s law)

What desire did Matt say characterizes David in this passage? (A desire to be used by God in the lives of others)

Matt briefly shared his story of coming to know Christ in order to emphasize the change that occurs within us all to be used by God. The Holy Spirit transforms our hearts so that we desire to know and obey God’s Word and to be used by Him in the lives of those around us.

In what ways can you relate to the passion Matt described having experienced after his conversion?

Who in your life has God burdened your heart with a hope to see them come to Christ?

Where do you desire for God to use you for His purposes today?

Scripture makes it clear that all Christians should have a concern for the salvation and welfare of those God has placed around us, but it is easy for this kind of conversation to prompt guilt and shame within us. If we seek to minister to the lost in our lives from a place of guilt and shame, we will end up exhausted and disappointed. In the following stanza, David helps us understand what motivates sustained obedience. Someone read verses 129–136.

What does Matt identify as David’s two motivations for being used by God?

1. A love for God
2. A love for other people

PSALM 119

Which verses stand out to you as demonstrating a love for God on the part of David?

How does David demonstrate a loving concern for the lost? (Verse 136 is the clearest where he says that his “eyes shed steams of tears, because people do not keep your law.”)

Go Deeper

Learn more about how to love the lost from the following passages:

Luke 19:41–44; Acts 17:16–34; Rom. 1:18–32

How do Jesus and Paul react to the lost around them? (Jesus weeps and Paul is stirred to witness to them.)

Who is Paul writing about in Romans 1:18–32? (Those who have rejected God)

How does he speak to that same group of people in Acts 17:22–34? (With patience, grace, and knowledge of their culture)

How should the models of Jesus and Paul inform the way you view and interact with the lost?

People do not come to believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior through angry tirades about their behavior. We have to be able to speak truthfully within the church about sin and its effects (as Paul does in Romans 1:18–32), but we also have to be able to serve those caught in sin with grace and compassion, as Christ did for us.

As Matt said, our impulse today is to react with anger and emotion rather than giving people the benefit of the doubt. Far too often, Christians today are marked by anger rather than love for one another and a desire for the lost to come to know Christ.

How to you tend to react to the brokenness of the world?

What are your relationships like with those who do not have a relationship with Jesus? What are some of the obstacles that keep you from greater compassion for the lost?

As we said before, this begins at the level of motivation. Guilt and shame are not sustainable motivations. The same can be said for hate and anger. We are called to be a people marked by sacrificial love and a desire for all to come to know the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

PSALM 119

How should that change the way you view verse 128 and other passages in the Bible that speak of “hating” sin and sinful ways? (What we see in this psalm is that David hates sin, but desires for sinners to see the beauty of God and His Word.)

Despite the brokenness of the world, God has a plan. Men and women around the world remain trapped in sin, but as Matt said, “God’s big plan is to send us right into the mess to herald the good news of the gospel.” We are all witnesses of His saving work and He desires to use us as messengers of His good news to those around us.

Throughout this passage, David clearly hates sin, but also desires to see the world around him redeemed. **What are some of the areas in your life where God has placed you around those who do not know Him?** (workplace, school, neighborhood, etc.)

How has God given you opportunities to bear witness to the lost? In what ways do you need to grow in your compassion for those who do not have a relationship with Christ?

While we are called to engage the brokenness of the world with the light of Christ, we also need God’s protection as we do so because we will face the temptation to return to our former ways.

How have you experienced the temptation to return to former ways around those who do not know Christ? What would doing so communicate about your faith?

Where do you need God’s protection today?

LAST WORD

As Matt said, God’s grace is not meant to terminate on us, but to overflow to others. At times, that will come to us naturally whereas other times it will take intentionality. Either way, we are called as Christians to shine the light of Christ in all that we do and say.

Take some time this week to consider where God has placed you and what opportunities He has provided for you to share the grace you have received with those who do not know Christ. Ask Him to create conversations and protect you from any temptation to return to your former life.

PSALM 119

LIVE IT OUT

Pray: Ask the Lord to give you opportunities this week to share with those around you the good news of Jesus Christ. Pray that He would protect you from temptation in those times as well.

Proclaim: As God gives you opportunities, be intentional about speaking the gospel to those around you who do not yet know Jesus.

Confess: As a result of this session, if the Holy Spirit has convicted you of a lack of compassion for the lost around you, bring that to light and confess it to God. Ask Him to give you a heart that breaks for the lost and a desire for them to know Christ.

Forgive: If you struggle to love those who do not know Christ because of bitterness in you toward someone that has hurt you, take steps to forgiving that person and ask God to remove that bitterness and replace it with compassion for the lost.

Serve: Identify a need you can meet in your neighborhood, workplace, or community and consider ways in which you can meet it. At some point this week, use the gifts and resources God has given you to serve that need as an expression of your belief in Christ.

PSALM 119

SESSION 8:

PSALM 119:137-152

Quick Start



READ

Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.



PRINT

Before meeting, make enough copies of this session's handout for your entire group. The handouts came with your download.



WATCH

Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

Note: For more detailed information, please see the How to Use The Leader's Guide document.

PSALM 119

OPEN

What is something you own that you only use for special occasions? (Chinaware, guest towels, outfit, etc.)

What makes it significant? Why do you keep it for only certain situations?

Together, the attributes and characteristics we listed here make that item unique, set apart even. That's where we want to start our time today by talking about the attributes of God and how they make Him unique in contrast to humanity.

READ

Read 119:137–152.

WATCH

Show Session 8: *Psalm 119:137–152* (13:15 minutes)

DISCUSS

Throughout the Old Testament, we are often given glimpses of the gospel message. Certain sections more than others foreshadow the coming of Jesus Christ and the fulfillment of God's promise of salvation to His people. This passage is a great example of that foreshadowing as David lays bare the gospel message we believe today. Someone read verses 137–144.

Which of the descriptions of God and His Word stands out to you the most from this passage? Why?

What characteristic of God and His Word does David use repeatedly? (Righteous/righteousness)

What term did Matt use to sum up these terms as a description of God? (He is "holy.")

PSALM 119

How would you define the term “holy”? (Matt explained that it means to be “set apart” in every way.)

David paints a clear picture of God as one who is set apart because He is holy. God is righteous, faithful, good, true, and reliable in every way. In contrast, David provides a picture of himself, which is representative of all of our experiences.

What are some of the descriptions David uses for himself? (“Small,” “despised,” experiencing “trouble” and “anguish”)

In verse 139, what did Matt key in on as a characteristic of all humanity? (We have forgetfulness about the truth of who God is as revealed in His Word.)

How does drifting from God’s Word affect us? (Matt described it in terms of an escalating hostility toward God. It begins with embracing self-sufficiency, fuels animosity toward God and His Word, and grows into hatred for His people.)

How have you experienced these effects in your own life?

When we turn away from God’s Word, our hearts harden. We begin to prefer creation to its Creator and blame the consequences of sin on God rather than seeing them as the culmination of our rebellion. Yet, no matter how far we have strayed God provides hope, which is what we see in the following section. Someone read verses 145–152.

According to these verses, what is the opportunity God provides in the midst of our brokenness? (The ability to see our need for Him to save us)

How has God used brokenness in your life to bring you to a place of recognizing your need for Him?

Our rebellion has consequences, but God is powerful enough to use our brokenness as a means to draw us to Him. As He opens our eyes to our sin, we come to see the helplessness of our situation such that He becomes our only answer. And when we cry out to Him, He listens.

In verses 145–146, we see the call of salvation, an act shared by every Christian at some point in their lives. **What circumstances did God allow in your life that eventually led you to cry out to Him for salvation? How did He respond?**

PSALM 119

What are the two truths Matt highlighted that our hope of salvation rests on?

1. The steadfast love of God
2. The nearness of God

How have you experienced the steadfast love of God? In what ways is it different from any kind of human love you've experienced?

DUST OFF THE HEBREW

In verse 149, David uses an important term translated “steadfast love.” The Hebrew word is *hesed*, which has no perfect parallel in the English language. Far more than simply an emotional kind of affection, *hesed* refers to God’s covenant love for His people, one characterized by faithfulness, kindness, and loyalty. The first time God describes Himself in Scripture, He includes the term *hesed* as an attribute He abounds in (Ex. 34:6–7). David describes God with this word six additional times in Psalm 119 (vs. 41, 64, 76, 88, 124, 159). For those of us who have believed in Christ, we are recipients of God’s *hesed*, a love that remains faithful to us even in our faithlessness.

How have you experienced the nearness of God? In what ways has God’s presence encouraged you during difficult times?

Matt described the presence of God as our most desperate need in life. The greatest consequence of our sin is that it has separated us from the presence of God. **How should this truth change the way you think about your sin and that of others? How does it encourage you to look beyond the surface and recognize the deeper need?**

The hope of our faith rests on God’s steadfast love and His presence in our lives, both of which have been made available through faith in Jesus Christ. Yet many today—including some in the Church—misunderstand what it means to be a Christian.

What were the four marks Matt covered of being a Christian?

1. To understand we’ve sinned against God
2. To believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ
 - Who absorbed the wrath of God toward sinners on the cross (1 John 2:2)

PSALM 119

- Who credited His righteousness to those who believe (2 Cor. 5:21)
 - Who rose from the dead victorious over death itself (1 Cor. 15:1-8)
3. To continually repent of sin
 4. To walk in newness of life through obedience to God's Word

Being a Christian means knowing God, which changes the way we live. **As you reflect on your life, how have you changed since beginning a relationship with Jesus Christ? What has God done to transform you?**

Leader: *If a member of your group feels unable to answer, see if others in the group can encourage that individual by naming the ways in which they've seen him or her changed as a result of knowing Christ (especially if the members of your group know one another well). Also, keep in mind that some members of your group may not be Christians, as Matt noted in the session. Use this as an opportunity to invite them into a deeper knowledge of the Christian faith and be sure to maintain regular communication with them going forward to ensure they do not feel ostracized from the group.*

Where do you desire to grow in your walk with Christ? What are you asking God to do in your life?

Where do you need to surrender to the love and presence of God? In what ways are trusting in yourself as opposed to the promises of God?

How will you take steps toward repentance and new life as a result of this session?

LAST WORD

Throughout Scripture, God has revealed Himself as one who abounds in steadfast love. Wherever you find yourself in your walk with Christ today, remember that truth. Just as He exercised grace and patience in previous generations, He offers that same grace today as an opportunity for repentance.

If the Holy Spirit is convicting you as a result of this session, be bold and act on that conviction. Invite God into the process and trust Him to guide you into a deeper and more mature walk with Him.

PSALM 119

LIVE IT OUT

Pray: Throughout this week, ask God to reveal to you the areas of your life where you need to grow and be proactive about pursuing maturity.

Remember: Write out Ephesians 2:1–10 on a piece of paper and place it somewhere where you will see it on a daily basis as a constant reminder to you of the truth about who you are, who God is, and the hope you have through faith in Jesus Christ.

Worship: Take some time to reflect on how God has been gracious to you in your failures and disobedience. As you do, worship Him for the steadfast love that He has shown you continually.

Memorize: Commit to memory the four marks of being a Christian that Matt shared in this session in order to clearly communicate to others what it means to believe in Christ.

Invite: Reach out to a mature believer in Christ and invite him or her to mentor you in a discipleship relationship as a way of growing in your walk with the Lord.

PSALM 119

SESSION 9:

PSALM 119:153-168

Quick Start



READ

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PRINT

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WATCH

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PSALM 119

OPEN

Have you ever been so distracted that you forgot to pay attention to where you were going? (texting while walking, changing the radio while driving, etc.)

How was that distraction dangerous for you? How was it dangerous to those around you?

With texting and the many other distractions we deal with on a regular basis, we can often lose sight of where we're heading. At times, it can make for a funny YouTube video, but it can also put our lives at risk as well as those of others if we aren't disciplined about looking up. As we'll see in our session today, that's true of our spiritual lives as well. We have to be disciplined about lifting our perspective and fixing our eyes on Christ.

READ

Read 119:153–168.

WATCH

Show Session 9: *Psalm 119:153–168* (11:45 minutes)

DISCUSS

The section of Psalm 119 that we'll be studying today is one where David feels surrounded by those who hate God and His ways. Despite the disobedience of the wicked, everywhere he looks it seems as though they continue to flourish and David begins to wonder where God is in all of it. Someone read verses 153–160.

How does David describe his circumstances? (Affliction, persecuted, facing adversaries, etc.)

How does he describe himself? (Consistent, obedient, righteous, etc.)

In other words, David has remained committed to God's Word and strives for obedience, yet he looks around and finds his enemies succeeding in their plots against him, which causes him to cry out to God.

PSALM 119

In what ways can you relate to his sentiment? What are some ways in which you are prone to similar discouragement? What causes you to wonder where God is at work?

How do you tend to react during those times? Where do you turn for hope and encouragement?

Our tendency many times is to numb the feelings through relationships or substances. Other times, we simply commit to the “moral betterment” Matt described, attempting to improve our performance. But neither is a sustainable solution.

Where does Matt say we find true encouragement in times of doubt? (By getting our eyes off of ourselves and on the King of Glory)

Someone read verses 161–168.

What concept does Matt say these verses introduce? (Awe)

How does he define “awe”? (Awe is the feeling of worship that occurs when you feel small in the presence of something that feels big.)

Go Deeper

Learn more about growing in an awe of God from the following passages:
Deut. 29:29; Ps. 46:10; Prov. 25:2; Is. 6:1–7

In addition to feeling small, what does Isaiah 6:1–7 add as part of the experience of encountering God?
(A deep awareness of our own sinfulness in contrast to God’s holiness)

What would it look like practically for you to put Psalm 46:10 into practice?

While we cannot know everything about God, what are we to do with what He has revealed of Himself?
(We are to seek it out and organize our lives in obedience to it.)

How have you experienced awe in your own life? (Seeing the Grand Canyon, swimming in the ocean, staring at the stars, witnessing the birth of a child, etc.)

PSALM 119

Despite his discouraging surroundings, David finds awe in the Word of God (v. 161). As he studies and reads, he is exposed to the glory of God. Throughout this study, we've said multiple times that the true treasure of our faith is that we get God. He is the primary source of our awe and He transcends our circumstances.

How have you experienced awe in your spiritual life? In what ways did it affect you?

What about God inspires you to worship Him?

Throughout Psalm 119, David declares his love for Scripture because of how it leads him to an awe-inspired worship of God. There is an intimacy to be had with God through His Word. When the New Testament introduces us to Jesus, He heightens that intimacy by teaching that God is not only the Lord of those who believe, but He is also their Father. Someone read Romans 8:15-17.

What spirit does this passage say we have received in Christ? ("The Spirit of adoption")

According to verse 15, if the end result of the spirit of slavery is fear, what is the end result of the "Spirit of adoption"? (Sonship to our Father)

How did Matt's explanation of "Abba" change any views you previously had about the term?

Bearing in mind that you are a child of a strong and caring Father through faith in Jesus Christ, how should that truth change your response to difficult times of life? How should God's protective care encourage a greater boldness within you?

As we've seen throughout this study, David delights in the Word of God, but not merely as an end in and of itself. He delights in God's Word because it leads him into a deeper relationship with his Lord by displaying the character of God and teaching how to live in obedience to Him.

Like Matt said, we have to learn how to stir up our affections for Jesus. **While it begins with God's Word, what else stirs your affections for Jesus? What causes your perspective to lift so that you see and savor your Father?**

What distracts you from focusing on Christ?

PSALM 119

As you consider your answer to these questions, has the Holy Spirit convicted you of any ways that you need to be more intentional about pursuing the things that deepen your love for Christ? What changes will you make as a result of this session?

LAST WORD

One of the constant temptations in our walk with Christ is to focus on our performance and lose sight of the righteousness we have been given through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Whatever doubts or fears we face cannot be defeated through our own efforts. They fade only when we see the beauty of our Savior.

God's Word is a means to that end. It leads us to Jesus and helps us to walk in a deeper relationship with Him. Let Scripture lift your gaze. As you seek to obey God's Word, allow it to fix your vision on Christ who is your righteousness by faith.

LIVE IT OUT

Pray: Each day this week, ask God to lift your perspective to fix your eyes on Christ rather than your own performance.

Detox: Make time this week to spend at least one hour in nature to disconnect from the busyness and distraction of life. Turn off your phone and bring only a Bible with you in order to be still and spend time in silence with God.

Encourage: Reach out to someone you know who feels discouraged because of their performance and help them to focus on the righteousness they receive through faith in Jesus Christ.

Reflect: Spend some time this week reflecting on what God has saved you from through His Son, Jesus Christ and let that lead you into a greater awe of your Savior.

Surrender: If the Holy Spirit has convicted you of any unhealthy fear that remains in you, be intentional about surrendering that to God and asking Him to help you embrace His spirit of adoption.

PSALM 119

SESSION 10:

PSALM 119:169-176

Quick Start



READ

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PSALM 119

OPEN

Have you ever experienced something so good that it made you dissatisfied in every other form of it? (an extra comfortable bed, a perfectly cooked steak, a brand new car, etc.)

How did it change your preferences moving forward? What did you give up or leave behind as a result?

Intimacy with God has the same effect on us as believers. The deeper we grow in our relationship with Christ, the more dissatisfied we become with worldly things and all they claim to offer. That's what we're going to spend our time talking about in today's session.

READ

Read 119:169–176.

WATCH

Show Session 10: *Psalm 119:169–176* (12:20 minutes)

DISCUSS

For the last nine weeks, we have looked at how King David encourages his readers to take seriously the Word of God and make it central to their daily lives. As we study the final verses of Psalm 119, we're going to see how Scripture shaped David in his prayers, his praise, and his longings. Someone read verses 169–176.

What does David ask for in verses 169–170? (Understanding and deliverance)

In what form does he ask for these to be given? (According to God's "word")

Matt observed that David's desire to be delivered according to God's Word is the difference between desiring worldly wisdom and the supernatural wisdom that only God can provide.

PSALM 119

When have you prayed a prayer similar to David's? How did you see God respond?

How do you work to differentiate between worldly wisdom and the wisdom of God?

What could you do to be more intentional about pursuing God's wisdom as you make decisions in the future?

Throughout Psalm 119, we've seen David's love for God's Word, which manifests itself in these verses by shaping the way he prays. It also surfaces in shaping the way he praises God. Let's look back specifically at verses 171–172.

How do these verses indicate God's Word shapes David's praise?

Leader: *Take this opportunity to point out the grammatical structure of each verse to your group. They form a cause and effect. Take verse 171 for example:*

"You teach me your statutes" (Cause)

"My lips will pour forth praise" (Effect)

The same goes for verse 172:

"All your commandments are right" (Cause)

"My tongue will sing of your word" (Effect)

This is a popular grammatical form found throughout many of the psalms and provides an opportunity to illustrate the importance of paying attention to structure when reading Scripture.

DUST OFF THE HEBREW

In verse 172, David describes God's commandments with the word *zedek*, which is often translated "right." However, the term carries a deeper meaning than simply correctness or accuracy. Here, David means for it to describe what is "righteous" and "just." In other words, God's Word is more than merely the most accurate among many potential ways of life. His Word carries a moral and ethical quality that is superior to all else. It is righteous and just. David uses *zedek* to describe God and His Word 10 additional times throughout the psalm (vs. 7, 62, 75, 106, 123, 138, 142, 144, 160, 164), a persistent reminder of the supremacy of Scripture over all else.

PSALM 119

At the time of David's writing, "God's Word" was the Old Testament, primarily the first five books of the Bible. These shaped David so thoroughly that they influenced both his prayer and praise life. Yet, many Christians today neglect reading the Old Testament for a variety of reasons.

How do you feel about reading the Old Testament? Does it create in you the same kind of joy David writes about as the New Testament? Why or why not?

What are some of the obstacles that stand in the way of allowing God's Word to shape your praise? (Fear of what others may think, struggling to understand Scripture, lack of discipline, etc.)

Matt said that when it comes to God's commands, He is "never trying to take anything from us, He's trying to give to us." **What do you think about that statement? Do you see God's commands as leading to joy? Or do you tend to see them as restrictive?**

What would have to change for you to praise God for His Word like David?

We've already seen how God's Word shapes David's prayers and praise, but it also shapes his longings. Like Matt said, David sees the Lord as an inexhaustible well he longs to draw more from each day. Let's look again at verses 173-175.

How do these verses reveal a longing on the part of David for a deeper intimacy with God through His Word?

Go Deeper

Learn more about holy dissatisfaction from the following passages:

Ex. 33:17-23; Ps. 63; Phil. 3:3-11

How do Moses, David, and Paul demonstrate a holy dissatisfaction in everything but God and His Word in these passages?

Besides God and His Word, what are some of the things that contend for the satisfaction of your heart? (family, career, salary, etc.)

What are some practical steps you could begin taking to surrender those to God in the days ahead?

How would your life look different if you were able to walk in the kind of consistent holy dissatisfaction demonstrated in these passages?

PSALM 119

Matt described this kind of longing as a “holy dissatisfaction” in everything but God. **Who have you known that longs for God with a “holy dissatisfaction”? How has their relationship with Christ impressed upon you?**

What would it look like for you to grow in your longing for God and His Word? How could you begin pursuing that longing in the days ahead? (Prayer, daily study, accountability, etc.)

As we’ve said before, it can be tempting to read this psalm and believe that David felt justified before God because of his obedience. David writes often about his commitment to God’s Law and having kept His commandments, but he ends the psalm with a request all of us can relate to—one that points to our need for God to accomplish what we cannot. Someone read verse 176.

What is David confessing in this verse? (That while he has not forgotten God’s Word, he remains inconsistent and in need of help)

How do you react to your own failures to obey God’s Word? What does your response tell you about your view of God?

Despite his commitment, David recognizes his inability to live in perfect obedience to God’s Word. Yet, he responds by crying out to the Lord to fill up where he is lacking, which is a very gospel-oriented prayer. No matter how hard we try, you and I will never be able to live a perfect life. We find ourselves in the same place as David crying out to God to save us. And God has answered that prayer through the person and work of His Son, Jesus Christ. Someone read Luke 19:10.

Who does Jesus say He came to save?

What did Matt say believing in Jesus does for our inconsistencies? (The death and resurrection of Jesus provide covering and forgiveness for our shortcomings and we are filled with the Holy Spirit by faith who helps us walk in obedience to God’s Word.)

How should this truth change the way you respond to your own shortcomings? What will you do differently when confronted with your failures in the future?

PSALM 119

LAST WORD

We never arrive in our relationship with Christ. To walk with Him is to set out on a journey of sanctification in which He molds and shapes us to look like Him. But He has promised that it is a journey He will bring to completion.

The world is competing for your attention. Any number of temptations exists to draw you away from a focus on God and His Word. The Christian life requires intentionality and persistence, but our discipline is fueled by the truth that we serve a loving and caring Father who is with us always. Be encouraged by that truth and let it drive you to God's Word and to the Word who became flesh—Jesus Christ.

LIVE IT OUT

Pray: Over the course of this week, ask that God would give you a holy dissatisfaction toward the things of the world and continue to create an appetite in you for Christ alone.

Invite: If you are in the process of thinking through a decision, reach out to 2–3 trusted believers and ask them for wisdom. Invite them to help you discern what is spiritual wisdom and what is earthly wisdom and trust God to lead you as a result.

Study: Pick a book of the Old Testament that you don't know well and commit to studying it over the next several weeks in order to begin familiarizing yourself with the parts of Scripture that remain alien to you.

Memorize: Commit to memory Luke 19:10 and let the truth that Jesus came to seek and save the lost encourage you when you identify failures and shortcomings in your life.

Worship: Spend time meditating on the ways God has extended His grace to you through Jesus Christ and worship Him for the goodness of His gospel and the lengths He has gone to in order to save you.