

Lesson 6: Psalm 119:129–152

“Your testimonies are wonderful;
therefore my soul keeps them.”

Psalm 119:129

Surrender: cease resistance; submit to authority; give oneself up; lay down one's arms; raise the white flag; give up the struggle

“My son, give me your heart...”
Proverbs 23:26a

“You are not your own,
for you were bought with a price.”
1 Corinthians 6:19b–20a

“If thou could'st empty
all thyself of self
like to a shell dishabited
Then might He find thee
on the ocean's shelf
and say—this is not dead—
And fill thee with Himself instead.”
T. E. Brown

Day 1

Psalm 119 presents a beautiful and powerful picture of a life surrendered to God and His testimonies. Through his “blunt requests, candid assertions, deep struggles, and joyful adorations” (David Powlison), we see a man who continually submits himself to his sovereign Lord.

1. Read Psalm 119: 129–152 and record the numerous words or phrases that point to this life of surrender.

When and how does the psalmist “cease resistance,” “raise the white flag,” or “give himself up” to His faithful Creator? Keep in mind, you won’t find the actual word “surrender,” but where do you see attitudes and actions that display a surrendered heart?

Attitudes

Actions

2. In Jesus’ time of ministry on the earth, He issued many warnings and rebukes to the Pharisees, a sect known for their strict observance of the Jewish laws.

Definition of pharisee: a member of a Jewish sect of the intertestamental period noted for strict observance of rites and ceremonies of the written law and for insistence on the validity of their own oral traditions concerning the law. (Merriam-Webster)

The Pharisees’ cups and plates looked very clean on the outside (Matthew 23:25), and yet Jesus had very hard and sobering words for them throughout the Gospels. The entire chapter of Matthew 23 is an example: “...you tithe...and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness...you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”

Read the following passages and jot down the phrases Jesus used to describe the actions and attitudes of the Pharisees:

Matthew 15:1–9

Luke 11:37–44

Luke 18:10–14

Antonym of surrender: resist, hold off

Near antonyms: battle, contend, defy, object, oppose, repel, thwart, withstand (Merriam-Webster)

The Pharisees did a great job of obeying their man-made laws, but neglected to follow the first two and greatest commandments: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind, and your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27) Because their “hearts were far from God,” they instead focused on the rules they could obey in their own strength—the rules they could obey and *appear* righteous while continuing to love themselves and their works more than God.

In contrast, the author of Psalm 119 is focused on “loving the Lord His God with all his heart, mind, soul and strength.” His desire to obey flows out of a soul surrendered to and devoted to his awesome God. Charles Spurgeon explains the actions and attitudes of the psalmist this way: “His religion was soul work; not with head and hand alone did he keep the testimonies; but his soul, his truest and most real self, held fast to them.”

The psalmist, aware of his tendency to double-mindedness, prays over and over that he may seek and follow God with his whole heart (Psalm 119: 2,10,34,69,145). He is consumed with longing to love and obey God with all that is within him, whether his life as a sojourner is easy or difficult. It seems that he has settled the issue once and for all to trust God, to love God, to follow and obey God, whether he sees God’s promises come to pass while still on this earth or not until Heaven. He sings with the song writer Judson W. Van de Venter, “All to Thee my blessed Savior, I surrender all.”

3. We will spend the rest of today and tomorrow steeping ourselves in passages that deal with this topic of surrender.

Look up Luke 1:26–38

Where do you see an attitude of surrender in Mary?

Write out a couple of sentences contrasting the proud, resistant heart of a Pharisee with the humble, surrendered hearts of Mary and the psalmist.

4. Where do you see “resistance,” “contention,” “objection,” or “hypocrisy” in your own life? Are you aware of an area in your life where possibly you are contending with the Lord, insisting on doing things your own way, or appearing one way but acting another?

Which specific traits of surrender seen in Mary and/or the psalmist do you think God most desires to cultivate in you?

5. Using exact phrases and verses from Psalm 119:129–152, write a prayer to the Lord, declaring your desire to live a life of surrender. Confess specific ways you are living for yourself and/or resisting His plan. Ask for His help to love, obey, and worship Him with your whole heart.

Father, in this area _____,

I confess I am wanting You to do things my way. I surrender the white flag.

I lay my desires at your feet and say, "May it be unto me according to Your will."

"Accept, O Lord, my entire liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my will. All that I am and have Thou hast given to me; and I give all back to Thee to be disposed of according to Thy good pleasure. Give me only the comfort of Thy presence and the joy of Thy love; with Thee I shall be more than rich and shall desire nothing more."

St. Ignatius of Loyola

“A Prayer for Surrendered Hearts and Straight Paths” by Scotty Smith (posted on *The Gospel Coalition*, March 9, 2013)

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. [Prov. 3:5–6](#)

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. [Matt. 6:33](#)

Dear Lord Jesus, as this day begins, many of us are facing normal and big-time decisions. We need the wisdom, guidance, and peace you alone can give. It’s a joy to come before your throne of grace confident of your audience, grateful for your advocacy, and resting in your authority.

Indeed, Lord Jesus, you’re an engaged Shepherd, not an absentee landlord. Even as we make plans in our hearts, you are actively ordering our steps ([Prov. 16:9](#)). Oh, the freedom and peace this brings! You are the Lord who “opens doors no one can shut” ([Rev. 3:8](#)); and the converse is just as true—you also shut doors no one can open. Our future is not tied to making the right decisions but to trusting the right Lord.

Because of your great love for us in the gospel, we’re learning to trust you, not just with our decisions, but also with all the “stuff” in our hearts—our longings, fears, hurts, and dreams. To acknowledge you in all of our ways isn’t to *make* you Lord, but to recognize and to rest in your lordship. In fact, we can no more make you Lord of something than we can make water wet, or chocolate good. You are who you are, Hallelujah!

So as we surrender to the occupied throne of heaven, we anticipate straight paths (not necessarily *easy* paths), perfect timing (yours, not ours), and redemptive results (those which reveal your glory and goodness). For those of us dealing with job changes, financial stresses, and health issues, show yourself to be both merciful and mighty, Lord Jesus. May your mercy keep us gentle and your might trump our impatience.

For those of us having to make important decisions for the people we love, be huge and present. Long-term care for aging parents; the best education for our kids; deciding on the right church family, in which to worship and serve you—make the way clear, Lord. As Prince of Peace, give us your peace as we wait upon you.

Lord Jesus, in these coming days write stories of redemption that will reveal your glory, showcase your grace, and leave us reveling in your goodness and timing. So very Amen we pray, in your trustworthy and beautiful name.

“There is but one way to tranquility of mind and happiness.

Let this therefore be always ready at hand with thee,

both when thou wakest early in the morning,

and when thou goest late to sleep,

to account no external thing thine own,

but commit all these to God.”

Epictetus

“Love so amazing, so divine,

demands my soul, my life, my all.”

Isaac Watts

“But suddenly what had been an ideal had become a demand—

total surrender to God,

the absolute leap in the dark, the demand was not ‘all or nothing,’

that stage had been passed.

Now the demand was simply ‘all!’”

C.S. Lewis

Day 2

Jesus Christ is the ultimate example of a life wholly surrendered to His Father.

1. What specific *actions/attitudes* of surrender do you see in the following passages?

Mark 14:32–42

John 4:34

Hebrews 10:5–7

2. Look up these passages and write out personal application in light of this question: What type of surrender is the Lord asking of me, His beloved child, today?

Mark 8:31–38

Romans 12:1–2

2 Corinthians 5:14–15

“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live,
but Christ who lives in me.”

Galatians 2:20

3. Read Psalm 119:129–152. Be on the lookout for additional signs of a surrendered heart that you might have missed in your first read-through. Use the chart from Day 1 to record any new insights you find.

4. Read through the songs below and engage with the texts. Share with Jesus why He is worthy of your surrendered heart, mind, and soul.

5. End your time by singing these songs to the Lord. He loves to hear you sing! Your voice of surrendered worship is pleasing to Him.

All To Jesus I Surrender

All to Jesus I surrender,
All to Him I freely give;
I will ever love and trust Him,
In His presence daily live.

All to Jesus I surrender,
Make me, Savior, wholly Thine;
Let me feel the Holy Spirit,
Truly know that Thou art mine.

All to Jesus I surrender,
Lord, I give myself to Thee;
Fill me with Thy love and power,
Let Thy blessing fall on me.

Refrain:

I surrender all,
I surrender all;
All to Thee, my blessed Savior,
I surrender all.

Judson W. Van de Venter

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

When I survey the wondrous Cross
On which the Prince of Glory died
My richest gain, I count but loss
And pour contempt on all my pride

See from His head, His hands, His feet
Sorrow and love flow mingled down
Did ever such love and sorrow meet?
Or thorns compose, so rich a crown

Were the whole realm of nature mine
That were an offering far too small
Love so amazing, so divine
Demands my soul, my life, my all

Oh the wonderful Cross, oh the wonderful Cross
Bids me come and die and find that I may truly live
Oh the wonderful Cross, oh the wonderful Cross
All who gather here by grace, draw near and bless Your name
(Isaac Watts / Chris Tomlin)

“Wonderful are Your works;
My soul knows it very well.”

Psalm 139:14

“...and His name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor...”

Isaiah 9:6

“The Scriptures are full of wonders,
and especially they reveal Him whose name is ‘Wonderful,’
But we need to have our eyes opened by the Holy Spirit,
Or we shall see nothing aright.”

Charles Spurgeon

Day 3

1. Read Psalm 119:129–144.

Notice how “wonder and obedience are linked throughout the stanzas” (James M. Boice).

Wonder: a cause of astonishment or admiration: marvel; miracle; rapt attention or astonishment at something awesomely mysterious or new to one’s experience. (Merriam-Webster)

The psalmist makes two declarations in verse 129: “Your testimonies are wonderful; my soul keeps them.” The following verses in these 2 stanzas then go on to explain many of the reasons *why* God’s testimonies are wonderful.

Go ahead and record all the reasons you see from these verses. Rather than looking for the “right answers,” ask the Lord to open your eyes to see the “wondrous things” in His Word that He wants to reveal to you by His Spirit.

God’s testimonies are wonderful because:

Wonder, wonderful, and their derivatives are used numerous times throughout the Scriptures. These words occur more than 30 times just in the book of Psalms alone! For examples, look back to Psalm 119:18,27.

In the midst of tremendous turmoil and suffering, the psalmist makes this bold declaration, “Your testimonies are wonderful”! This is not the response of someone focused on his pain. When we find ourselves in a tumultuous storm, or when God asks us to walk through a long season of suffering, it is often challenging to see the wonder, the goodness, the righteousness, and the faithfulness of our God. God’s ways don’t always feel wonderful. Our gut-wrenching pain sometimes obscures His wonder and majesty. It seems to me that the psalmist knew his God well and was grounded in the character of His God before the trials came. By the time “trouble and anguish had found him out,” he had settled the fact in his soul that God is righteous. Gracious. Faithful. Good. Unchanging. Eternal. Steadfastly loving and kind. He had “well tried” God’s promises, and they had all proven true!

There’s NO time like the present to get to know our God! What we are able to learn and understand of Him now will greatly influence our ability to trust in His unchanging character when we find ourselves walking through darkness and tremendous pain. God has most definitely provided a way to “remain stable and steadfast in our faith, not shifting from the hope of the gospel” (Colossians 1:23). This steadfast faith requires the generous grace of our ever-present Helper, as well as confidence in God’s character. This requires “sitting at the Lord’s feet and listening to His teaching.” Martha’s sister, Mary, is a wonderful example of the repeated cry in Psalm 119: “Teach me Your statutes.” In the very words of Jesus, “One thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the

good portion, which will not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:41). Mary, like the author of Psalm 119, had discovered and delighted in the wonderful teachings of Jesus!

“Those who know them best
wonder at them most.”

Charles Spurgeon

2. Use the concordance at the back of your Bible to find and savor several other passages that contain these words: wonderful, wonders, and/ or wondrous. Choose one or more of your favorites and write them out here:

Sadly, through the cares of this world, suffering, and/ or various other obstacles, we all too often lose this wonder towards God and His Word; or possibly, we never had it in the first place. Jen Wilkin believes that, for Christian women, “our primary problem is that we lack awe ... We can miss majesty when it is right in front of us.”

It is October as I write this, and stores are already illuminated with the sounds and smells of Christmas. I’ve already spotted Buddy from the movie *Elf* on the store shelves. In the fantasy comedy *Elf*, Santa can’t get his sleigh off the ground, due to a lack of Christmas spirit in the city of New York.

Allow me to use a silly comparison to ask a serious question. If your sleigh would only fly based on the sense of awe and wonder you have towards God and His God-breathed Word, would it soar? Sputter to get above the rooftops?

If your sleigh is stuck in the snow, what can you do to get it off the ground?

“The law of the Lord is perfect,
reviving the soul”

Psalm 19:7

The God-breathed Word of God has the power and the ability to revive your soul!

“I will praise you with an upright heart,
when I learn your righteous rules.”

Psalm 119:7 (emphasis)

Our praise and wonder originate with and flow out of our knowledge and understanding of His wonderful testimonies.

3. Our Teacher is calling us to study His love letter. Use His powerful words of life to cry out to the One who can open our eyes to His wonder and His wonderful testimonies. Meditate on and memorize passages that speak to God’s holiness, righteousness, and power.

The passages below might be a great place to begin if you'd like to grow in awe and wonder with our holy, awesome, and righteous God. Choose at least one of these passages to soak in today. Take time to STOP and CONSIDER His majesty, His wondrous works.

Exodus 15:1–18

1 Samuel 2:1–10

Psalms 86:8–10

Psalms 99:1–3

Isaiah 40:12–31; 57:15

“On the glorious splendor of Your majesty, and on Your wondrous works,
I will meditate”.

Psalms 145:5

“Come and see what God has done;
He is awesome in his deeds toward the children of man.”

“Say to God, ‘How awesome are your deeds!’”

Psalms 66:3,5

“Your righteousness is
righteous forever...”
Psalm 119:142a

“Commit your way to the Lord;
Trust in Him, and He will act.
He will bring forth your righteousness as the light,
And your justice as the noonday.”
Psalm 37:5–6

“So seek ye first the kingdom of God
And the wealth of His righteousness
For wherever your treasure lies
There will you find your heart”
John Michael Talbot

Day 4

Read Psalm 119:137–144 and highlight the many times “righteous” is used.

“This passage deals with the perfect righteousness of Jehovah and his word, and expresses the struggles of a holy soul in reference to that righteousness. “(Charles Spurgeon)

The Hebrew word for “righteous” (*tzedek*) starts with the letter that begins each verse in this 18th stanza of Psalm 119 (*tsadhe*).

One of the many reasons the testimonies of the Lord are wonderful is because in them and through them we see the righteousness of God on display.

Jerry Bridges, a lover of God’s holy Word and a prolific author until his passing in 2016, wrote a great deal on the topic of God’s righteousness. He states, “The word righteous in the Bible basically means perfect obedience ... As an attribute of God, the righteousness of God refers to who God is in his holiness and perfect justice, and it ultimately means God’s unswerving commitment to display his glory and uphold his name.”

In lesson #1, we spent some time discussing the righteousness of God, but let’s dig a little deeper into this topic.

1. What do you see/learn about the righteousness of God and His Word from this stanza (137– 144), as well as from other verses in Psalm 119, such as 7, 40, 75, 160, 164?

The righteousness of God

The righteousness of His Word

The psalmist is declaring, shouting from the rooftops, “My God is righteous. His Word is righteous and all He does is righteous!” Trouble and anguish are very real and near to the psalmist and yet, he knows that God’s ways are righteous! He *could* be expending his energy doubting the character of God with questions like this: “Are You good? Will You be good to me?” Instead, he uses his energy to declare and boast in God: “Righteous You are, O Lord, and right are Your ways” (v.137). Even if his circumstances seem unfair, unjust, and more than he can handle, his mind and his heart are settled on the character of His faithful God. “You are good, and You do good” (v.68). “Righteous are you, O Lord, and right are your rules. You have appointed your testimonies in righteousness and in all faithfulness.” (vs. 137–138)

Charles Spurgeon says this of verse 137: “This is a great stay to the soul in time of trouble. It should be our glory to sing this brave confession when all things around us appear to suggest the contrary. This is the richest adoration—this which rises from the lips of faith when carnal reason mutters about undue severity, and the like.”

2. Have you noticed just how often the living and active Scriptures highlight God’s righteousness **and** His faithfulness in the same breath? “You have appointed your testimonies in righteousness **and** in all faithfulness” (v.138).

Look up the following verses and record the phrases that speak of these two traits:

Psalm 89:14

Psalm 119:75

Psalm 143:1

Revelation 19:11

- How does the truth that God and His Word are both completely righteous and utterly faithful, always and forever, intersect with your reality today? How do these truths about God have the ability and power to change the way you are thinking/worrying about something in the future?

3. Look up Romans 1:16–17. Where is the righteousness of God most clearly revealed?

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1–4. Simply put, what is the gospel?

“The good news of the gospel is that Jesus lived a life of perfect righteousness, of perfect obedience to God, not for His own wellbeing but for His people. He has done for me what I couldn’t possibly do for myself. But not only has He lived that life of perfect obedience, He offered Himself as a perfect sacrifice to satisfy the justice and the righteousness of God.” (R.C. Sproul)

Read 2 Corinthians 5:21. What is the radical and amazing Great Exchange explained in this verse?

Bridges, in his book *The Bookends of the Christian Life*, presents the compelling argument that “the perfect righteousness of Christ, which is credited to us, is the first bookend of the Christian life.” As a follower of Christ, if we think of our life as a long bookshelf, our unity with Christ and His righteousness must be not only our starting place, but the Truth that holds everything else together.

“The news of this righteousness is the gospel. We’re clothed with His righteousness so that as God looks at us in union with Christ, He always sees us to be as righteous as Christ Himself. And that changes everything.” (Bridges)

“We must learn to live.... looking *every day* outside ourselves to Christ and seeing ourselves standing before God clothed in His perfect righteousness. *Every day* we must *re-acknowledge* the fact that there’s nothing we can do to make ourselves either more acceptable to God or less acceptable.” (Bridges)

4. Look once again at Psalm 119:137–144. Notice and record particular ways that the psalmist looks *outside* of his feelings and circumstances *toward* God and His faithful ways. In what particular ways do you see the psalmist placing his confidence in Christ’s righteousness rather than his circumstances or his own good or bad behavior?

Spend some time rejoicing and exulting in your righteous and faithful God!

“I will greatly rejoice in the Lord;
My soul shall exult in my God,
For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation;
He has covered me with the robe of righteousness...”
Isaiah 61:10

“As for you, if you redirect your heart
and lift up your hands to him [in prayer]” (CSB)
Job 11:13

“So, commit yourself to God completely.
Reach out your hands to him for help.” (NIRV)
Job 11:13

“...Your name and remembrance are the desire of our soul.
My soul yearns for you in the night;
My spirit within me earnestly seeks You.”
Isaiah 26:8–9

“Prayer without the heart is but as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. Prayer is only lovely and weighty, as the heart is in it, and no otherwise. God hears no more than the heart speaks. If the heart be dumb, God will certainly be deaf. No prayer takes with God, but that which is the travail of the heart.”

Thomas Brooks

Day 5

Read Psalm 119:145–152

This final stanza of lesson 6 paints a vivid picture of a surrendered heart praying in the midst of trouble. Those with evil intent are close at hand (v. 150), and yet the psalmist reminds himself and declares that His God is also near, and His promises are true! (v. 151) His entire body, mind, and soul appear to be engaged in fervently crying out for help.

1. Use this stanza, as well as what you've observed in past stanzas, to contemplate the following questions:

How does a surrendered heart pray?

What does a surrendered heart ask?

When does a surrendered heart pray?

Where does a surrendered, praying heart place its hope and trust?

Throughout Psalm 119, we see a desperate, humble man continually offering up earnest, raw, and fervent prayers. James 5:16 tells us, "The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working." The King James version says it like this: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." A righteous person prays fervent, earnest, and effective prayers **with** his whole heart **from** his whole heart!

2. Read James 5:13–18.

What else do you see/learn about prayer from this passage?

James, "carried along" and controlled by the Spirit of God (2 Peter 1:21), presents the Old Testament prophet Elijah as an example of a praying person.

How is Elijah described in James 5:17–18?

3. To get an in-depth look at Elijah, read 1 Kings 16:29 through chapter 19. If you are short on time, focus on chapter 18.

In 1 Kings chapters 17 and 18, not only do miraculous things *happen* to Elijah, the Lord allows Elijah the privilege of participating *with* Him in order to *bring about* the miraculous. Through the Lord's power and Spirit, Elijah experienced tremendous success and victory. Why then, does Elijah so quickly find himself running for his life and hiding in a cave?

How comforting to see that even Elijah, the mighty prophet of God, had a nature just like ours. He was full of faith one day, cowering in fear and despair the next. How encouraging to learn that God does not require perfection from His children in order for our prayers to be heard. Because of the perfect obedience of His Son Jesus, our gracious Heavenly Father hears our prayers and uses our prayers for our sanctification as well as for the good of others. How faith-building to know that, as righteous people covered in our Savior's robe of righteousness, our prayers can have the same power as the prayers of Elijah!

4. What words or phrases would you use to describe the prayers of Elijah, a righteous man with a nature like ours?

I am struck by Elijah's patience, perseverance, and tenacity as he prays. Elijah's servant didn't even see a tiny cloud until the 7th trip up the mountain, yet all the while, Elijah is praying, "bowed down on the earth." I find myself asking, "Would I have given up praying after the second trip? Fifth?" How often am I willing to stay on bended knee for extended times of prayer?

5. Look up the passages below to see how the Lord encourages/asks us to persevere in prayer.

Isaiah 62:6–7

Luke 11:5–10 or 18:1–8

The author of Psalm 119 is also certainly an example of a man who persevered in prayer! From today's verses alone, (145–152) we see a man who:

- prays earnestly (v.145)
- day and night (v.147–148)
- with faith (v.147)
- while declaring and pleading the promises (v.149)

James M. Boice says this stanza is about how the writer "had learned to use God's Word when praying." The psalmist didn't have the same advantage that we do, to have God's Word at his fingertips. Yet he had the testimonies "stored up" and ready for use, day or night!

6. Let's conclude this lesson by praying with our Bibles open! Using specific verses from this week's lesson (Psalm 119:129–152), spend some time in surrendered, earnest prayer—praising, thanking, repenting, declaring and pleading the promises of our mighty God.

“In all circumstances take up the shield of faith ... and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.”

Ephesians 6:16–18

“When thou prayest,
rather let thy heart be without words
Than
Thy words without heart.”
John Bunyan

“God Loves to Be Asked”

“Now think about this for a moment. God's will is that we, his creatures, ask him for things. And it is not just his will, it is his delight. He loves to be asked for things. Proverbs 15:8 says, "The prayer of the upright is His delight." He is so eager to hear prayers and respond to them that he says in Isaiah 65:24, "It will also come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear." In fact, he takes special steps to see to it that he is constantly badgered. I say that reverently and, I think, truly on the basis of Isaiah 62:6–7, "On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen; all day and all night they will never keep silent. You who remind the LORD, take no rest for yourselves; and give Him no rest until He establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth." So God loves being asked for things so much that he appoints people to "give him no rest" but to "remind the Lord" and "never [to] keep silent."

Meditating on this is very encouraging to our faith and hope. This means that God, the Creator of the Universe, who holds our life in his hands and rules the world, is the kind of God who loves to be asked for things.”

(excerpted from John Piper’s sermon “Devote Yourselves to Prayer” from January 9, 2000, published on *Desiring God*.)