

“Oh, how we love Your Word, Father!
It is precious beyond all earthly treasures.
Incline our hearts to the Word,
And break our bondage to other things.
Let us see wonders in it,
Pierce through our soul and waken spiritual life.
Confirm the marrow of our faith and make us real,
Through and through.
Forbid that we would be false to Your faithfulness,
And make us mighty in the Spirit.
Through Christ, we pray, Amen”
John Piper

“May the Word of God dwell richly
In my heart from hour to hour,
So that all may see I triumph
Only through His power.”
Kate B. Wilkinson, 1859-1928

“In humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls”
James 1:21 NASB

Lesson 3, Psalm 119: 41-88

"You are good and do good;
teach me your statutes."
Psalm 119:68

Study: devote time and attention to acquiring knowledge

Day 1

Read Psalm 119:41-88.

1. What words would you use to describe the attitudes and emotions of the psalmist?
2. Find and highlight or circle the 3 specific verses where the psalmist asks God to teach him something. Look back also at verses 12, 26, 29, and 33. By the end of this psalm, we will see in ten different verses how the psalmist asks God to "teach him." He is teachable and desiring to learn from the One "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3). The psalmist is a student of God's commandments, declaring his utter need for God's help not only to understand the commandments, but to obey the commandments in his daily thoughts, convictions, and actions.
3. Look up the following verses to see the importance the Lord places on humility and a teachable spirit. Rewrite them in your own words.

Psalm 51:17

Isaiah 57:15

Isaiah 66:2

The Lord blesses the humble, the teachable. There is no greater example of humility than our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

4. Read Philippians 2:3-11 and record specific words or actions that describe/define Jesus' heart of humility.

- Notice the hope and truth for believers declared in verse 5. How and why is humility attainable for followers of Jesus?

5. Compose a prayer to Jesus, specifically thanking Him for His humility. Confess any ways you have been proud towards Him or others. Ask for the help of His Spirit to grow in developing a teachable, humble spirit, using one or more of the verses or passages from this week's passage.

"O Father, as much as it lies within us,
We humble ourselves under Your mighty hand,
Have mercy on us in our battle with pride,
And help us put to death all that is
Arrogant and self-exalting in our lives.
Show us our utter helplessness without You,
And the sweetness of Your undeserved mercy,
Grant us to walk in meekness and lowliness of spirit,
And to make known the greatness of Christ,
In His name we pray. Amen"
John Piper

"Holy words long preserved
For our walk in this world
They resound with God's own heart
Oh, let the ancient words impart

Words of Life, words of Hope
Give us strength, help us cope
In this world, where e'er we roam
Ancient words will guide us home"
Lynn Deshazo, "Ancient Words"

"How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!
What more can He say than to you He hath said,
To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?"
"K" in Rippon's Selection, 1787

"Psalm 119 opens doors into the rest of Scripture.
Old friends become better friends."
David Powlison

Day 2

Our spiritual discipline focus during Lesson 3 is "Study: devote time and attention to acquiring knowledge."

Just how important is it that we regularly devote time and attention to studying God's Word?

1. Read Ezra 7:7-11 and notice how Ezra, the priest, is described. What is the reason for "God's good hand to be upon him"?

2. Using the passages below, complete the following statements:

God's Word is:

Psalm 119:89

Isaiah 40:8; 55:10-11

2 Timothy 3:14-17

Hebrews 4:12

1 Peter 1:23-25

God's Word can satisfy me in these ways:

Psalm 119: 25, 107, 156

Isaiah 55:1-3

Matthew 4:4

John 6:35

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. In him was life!" (John 1:1,4)

God's Word leads us to Christ, Who leads us to **life!**

The pleas and declarations found in Psalm 119 give us a powerful picture of someone who recognizes his desperate need for the life-giving elements found in the Word!

3. Record the declarations and requests for life found in Psalm 119:50, 77, and 88.

Take a look back also at these verses: Psalm 119:25, 37, and 40

Declarations

Requests

According to these verses, where are the places abundant life is found?

4. Read Acts 8:26-40 and record the actions and attitudes of this Ethiopian student towards the Scriptures:

Attitudes

Actions

Consider Justin Taylor's thoughts regarding this passage of Scripture in this excerpt from "A Teachable Spirit" (*Tabletalk Magazine*, June 1st, 2009).

To be sure, this is a historical narrative recounting an event. The purpose is not necessarily to guide believers today in how to read their Bibles or how to think about the teaching of God's Word. But the elements within it nonetheless correspond to some wise principles we can adopt as our own. So let's work through the passage again, letting the various points serve as triggers for our own reflection on understanding the Word of God and those who teach it.

First, the Ethiopian wrestles with and labors to understand the meaning of God's Word. He doesn't wait for help; he first tries on his own to figure out what the text is saying. He is not content merely to skim the Scriptures, putting a check mark next to his reading in the scroll for that day. And so it is with us — we must spend time in the Bible, working hard and trusting God for insight into its meaning. Paul expressed this as a command followed by a promise: "Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything" (2 Tim. 2:7).

Second, the eunuch humbly acknowledges his own insufficiency and lack of understanding. He desires to understand what the Word says, he admits that he needs help, and then he asks for it. We should approach God first remembering that He wants to be asked and that He promises to assist us: "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him" (James 1:5). And what should we pray? Psalm 119 provides many examples of how to pray for understanding and application:

v.64, 66,68 Teach me...

v. 73, Give me understanding that I may learn...

v.80. May my heart be blameless....

Third, the eunuch asks a good, clear, relevant question based upon his own wrestling with the meaning of the text. Asking good questions is evidence of good thinking. If you don't ask good questions about the text, you won't engage your mind and you won't be able to evaluate the answers.

Fourth, he listens carefully to the Christ-centered, gospel-focused teaching before him. Jesus warned that we must take care how we listen (Luke 8:18), and the Ethiopian eunuch does just that. For many of us, our inclination is to talk first and listen second, but Christ-followers must be “quick to hear” and “slow to speak” (James 1:19).

Finally, he puts into practice what he has just learned from the Word and from his commentator. Philip had told him “the good news about Jesus” (Acts 8:35), which probably included the teaching that members of God’s covenant community will publicly identify with Christ in the act of baptism. So the Ethiopian official models for us James’ command to “be doers of the word, and not hearers only” (James 1:22).

So let us be the sort of people who prayerfully and carefully immerse ourselves day and night in God’s Word (Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:2). Let us also be the sort of Berean-like people who receive good teaching about God’s Word “with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so” (Acts 17:11).

5. Questions for personal reflection

- Am I taking time to study and wrestle with the Word?
- Do I regularly ask God for His help to see and understand the Word?
- How often do I take the time to slow down and listen to what the Spirit is saying?
- What step can I take to become a Berean?

6. Take time to pray. Confess ways you have neglected the study of God’s Word. Ask the Lord to help you grow in becoming a student of His Word, one who eagerly examines the Scriptures daily. Find specific verses from this week’s passage to incorporate into your prayer.

7. Continue memorizing verses or passages you have chosen to store in your heart. If you’d like more on the topic of reading the Bible or want help in establishing a habit of Bible reading, here are two suggestions:

- *When I Don’t Desire God*, John Piper, chapter 8, pages 115-118
- <https://www.crossway.org/articles/6-attitudes-we-need-when-studying-the-bible/>

“Heavenly Father help us know the wonders of Your Word and your world.
Keep us from the trivializing effects of our culture.
Help us fight for the joy of seeing great things.
Put us out of taste with trifles.
Grant the weight of glory-
Your glory- to rest upon us.
So make us a humble, wise, loving
People for Your great name's sake.
In Jesus' name. Amen”
John Piper

“It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes.”
Psalm 119:71

“I never knew the meaning of God's word, until I came into affliction.
I have always found it one of my best schoolmasters.”
Martin Luther

Day 3

The section of verses used for Lesson 3 is the longest section used in this study. Therefore, Lesson 3 could possibly take more than five days to complete. Day 3, in particular, might take more than one day of study to finish.

It would be difficult to study Psalm 119 for very long without acknowledging the acute suffering that the psalmist is enduring as he pours out his anguished heart to his God. It's obvious that he has dealt with suffering in the past and is also dealing with it in the present. Suffering is most certainly a common theme throughout all of Scripture. In this seven-lesson study, we will just begin to scratch the surface of what the Word teaches us about suffering. However, from Psalm 119 alone, we can learn a great deal about how we as followers of Christ are to think about and respond to trials and suffering while sojourners on this earth.

Read 119:41-88.

1. Write down a few phrases that clue you in to the author's suffering.
-Record specific words used to describe his condition:

Jesus tells us in John 16:33, "In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

Peter, a disciple of Jesus, says this about trials: "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you" (1 Peter 4:12).

From these passages, as well as countless others, Scripture teaches that suffering is a natural part of this earthly life. James M. Boice, in his *Psalms, Volume 3, an Expositional Commentary*, gives a helpful explanation of the different forms of suffering we might encounter as we live on this earth, waiting for Jesus to return:

- First, some suffering is simply the common lot of man. We live in an imperfect world: "Man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7).
- Second, there is suffering that is corrective. This is the most obvious category of suffering for most Christians and what is described in Psalm 119:67: "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word."
- Third, some suffering is constructive. That is, it is used by God to sharpen our skills and develop our character: "Suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character; hope" (Romans 5:3-4).
- Fourth, some suffering is given only to glorify God in it and by it. "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in Him" (John 9:3).
- Fifth, cosmic suffering. Cosmic suffering demonstrates before Satan and the angels that a person can love and trust God for who he is in himself and not merely for what he gets out of him. Job is an example of cosmic suffering.

The topic of suffering is an incredibly difficult one. Our finite minds often cannot begin to understand the good purposes in it, the seeming randomness to it, the sheer horror of it. Even while knowing these truths about suffering, I find myself trying to avoid it at all costs. It's safe to assume that most, if not all of us, would never choose suffering if given the option. And yet, suffering comes. Maybe you are in the midst of suffering, or maybe you are walking closely with someone who is suffering. The author of Psalm 119 is most certainly in the midst of suffering on

more than one level. How can he honestly say there are benefits to suffering? "It is good for me that I was afflicted" (Psalm 119:71).

2. Look thoughtfully through verses 65-88

- Using Boice's descriptions, which forms of suffering do you think are in view here?
- What specific benefits do/did his afflictions bring him?

Record specific actions and attitudes the author chose to have in the midst of his suffering:

Attitudes

Actions

In your own words, how would you describe the psalmist's perspective on suffering explained in these verses?

3. According to the following passages, what other benefits do we receive from trials?

Romans 5:1-5

Romans 8:16-18

James 1:2-4

4. Read Isaiah 53:1-12 and record the painfully descriptive verbs and phrases used to describe our Savior's suffering:

"Humility does not feel it has a right to better treatment than Jesus got." John Piper
"For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps." 1 Peter 2:21

5. Read 1 Peter 2:21-23 and 4:12-19 and complete the following:
While suffering, Jesus chose to:

While suffering, Jesus chose not to:

What phrases from this week's verses in Psalm 119 convey the same perspective as these verses in 1 Peter?

6. This kind of godward perspective towards suffering requires a diligent "renewing of the mind." Following our Savior's steps and example is not for the faint of heart! Take some time to consider your own personal suffering in light of these truths.

What do you know to be true about God in the midst of your suffering?

What specific promises/verses can you trust in / cling to in the midst of your suffering?

7. Cry out to the Lord to help you see His goodness in the midst of your suffering. Ask your High Priest, who is well able to sympathize, to pour out His abundant grace that you might have the faith to declare with the psalmist: "You are good and do good" (Psalm 119:68).

If you'd like help in getting started, use the psalmist's requests and compose your own heartfelt prayer:

"Let your...

Give me...

May my...

In your...

"Affliction is not good in itself and does not usually seem good to us when we are enduring it, but it has a good purpose when God sends it, as he frequently does in the case of his cherished children." James M. Boice

"Entering the day without a serious meeting with God, over His Word and in prayer, is like ... taking a trip without filling the tires with air or the tank with gas. The human heart does not replenish itself with sleep. The body does, but not the heart. The spiritual air leaks from our tires, and the gas is consumed in the day. We replenish our hearts not with sleep, but with the Word of God and prayer. Thousands of saints have discovered through the centuries that starting the day by filling the mind with the Word of God will bring more joy and more love and more power than traveling on yesterday's gas."

John Piper

"If you receive my words and treasure up my commandments within you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding."
Proverbs 2:1-6

"Then the Lord said to me, 'You have seen well, for I am watching over my word to perform it.'"
Jeremiah 1:12

Day 4

Read Psalm 119:41-88, noticing many of the words that are used two or more times in this section of verses.

1. Choose at least two of these repeated words and spend time meditating on their meaning and significance. Here are just a few examples of repeated words:

***Remember; think of**

What does the author remember; not forget? What does he ask His God to remember?

***Hope**

In what does the psalmist place his hope?

***Promise**

What promises does the psalter make? What promises does God make?

***Comfort**

Where does the author find/take comfort?

2. Take a second look at the *Teth* stanza, verses 65-72. *Teth* is the first letter of the Hebrew word "good." Notice how many times the word "good" is used in this stanza. Take a minute to jot down the phrases where "good" is used.

In verse 68 the psalmist declares that the Lord **is** good and does good. I have never studied Hebrew, but I love to find the original meaning of words in my Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible. The Hebrew word used here for "does good" is *yatab*, meaning "make beneficial"; "goodness in the broadest sense." "It ranges from practical, economic, or material good to abstract good (desirability, pleasantness, and beauty)."

Write a sentence or two, explaining how the truth of verse 68 intersects with your present life circumstances.

3. "Delight" is another word used several times in this passage. Where does the psalmist find his delight?

How well can you relate to this? To what degree are you presently finding delight in God's Presence and His Word?

Rather than feeling shame or condemnation, use this opportunity to **cry out** to the One who is eager to help you, to the One who calls you his "chosen, holy and dearly loved" (Col 3:12).

Repent of ways you are delighting in other things or people, more than you are delighting in Him. Our Savior loves to answer these kinds of prayers! He is jealous for our time and affections.

If helpful, use the following prayer and make it your own:

Merciful Father, help me to "find my delight in your commandments, to love them" (Ps 119:47). Please help me to "delight in the way of your testimonies as much as in all riches" (Ps 119:14). Please forgive me for loving and delighting in _____, more than I love and delight in You. By Your Spirit, make me one of the blessed ones, who "delight in the law of the LORD and meditate on it day and night" (Psalm 1:1-2).

5. Spend time hiding your chosen verses/passages in your heart.

"The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end;
They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.
'The Lord is my portion', says my soul, therefore I will hope in him".
Lamentations 3:22-24

"I believe in the power of the indwelling Word of God to solve a thousand problems before they happen, and to heal a thousand wounds after they happen, and to kill a thousand sins in the moment of temptation, and to sweeten a thousand days with the 'drippings of the honeycomb.'"
John Piper

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly"
Colossians 3:16

Day 5

Read 119:41-88

1.. What declarations does the psalmist make about God and his character in verses 41-88?

God is/God does:

Whether in suffering or out of suffering, God's Word is:

Take a look at verse 84. Do you notice any missing topic, that's mentioned in nearly every other verse throughout this psalm?

Do you think this omission is intentional? Why or why not?

Is it possible that the author is so deeply discouraged that he momentarily forgets the importance of the Word and the promises of the Word?

Spurgeon believes verses 81-88 are the 'lowest points' of the psalm: "This octave is the midnight of the psalm, and very dark and black it is. However, even in the blackness, stars....shine out, and the last verse gives promise of the dawn." (*The Treasury of David*, Charles Spurgeon)

- How does the psalmist once again speak truth to himself in verses 86-88?
- What is the "promise of the dawn"?

2. Notice the specific character trait of God that is highlighted at the beginning, middle, and end of this section of Scripture, in verses 41, 64,76, and 88. Go ahead and circle these references.

According to verse 41, where do we find God's steadfast love demonstrated?

3. Read the entire chapter of Romans 5 and John 3:16.

How does God display His love to all people?

What numerous gifts do we receive through God's steadfast love?

The entire book of Psalms is replete with the theme of the steadfast love of the Lord! In fact, God's steadfast love is declared 127 different times in the book of Psalms alone! In Psalm 32:10, David makes this declaration: "Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord." David clings to the truth that even in the midst of suffering, the Lord's steadfast love will comfort him, sustain him, and give him life!

4. Choose one or more of the following psalms to read: Psalm 33, 98, or 103.

Take time to marvel and praise your heavenly Father for loving you with a constant, unconditional, everlasting love! Praise Jesus for dying in your place, the righteous for the unrighteous, and offering you peace and right standing with a holy God. There is NO greater love than this, that "Someone lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

5. To complete this lesson, read through Psalm 36:5-10, savoring the beautiful description of our awesome, generous, steadfast, loving God and the benefits available to us when we feast on Him and find our refuge in Him.

"How precious is your steadfast love, O God!"

"You give [us] drink from the river of your delights."

Corporate prayers and songs that could be used for fellowship groups or for personal use:

"O merciful God, incline our hearts to your Word and the wonders of your glory. Wean us from our obsession with trivial things. We believe that you are the All-glorious One, and that there is none like you. Help our unbelief. Forgive the wandering of our affections and the undue attention we give to lesser things. Have mercy on us for Christ's sake, and fulfill in us your great design to display the glory of your grace. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.
Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ, John Piper, pg 23-24

"Christ the Word," *The Valley of Vision*, pg. 17

"A Minister's Bible," *The Valley of Vision*, pg. 190

Songs:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EZdzif5uuv4>

The Spoken Word, "I believe in the Scriptures"

Philip P. Bliss, "Wonderful Words of Life"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ET4oCbEsrlU>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vJnDAXOGPXI>