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For the past few weeks we have been looking at some of the Psalms. There are 150 Psalms in the book. There is a variety of styles and themes contained in these Psalms. Today we are going to look at Psalm 119. It is the longest Psalm in the book. As a matter of fact it is the longest chapter in the Scriptures. 176 verses. The person who was responsible for putting this Psalm together was a **creative genius**. There are **22 stanzas** in the Psalm. They correspond with the Hebrew alphabet. There are 22 letters in the alphabet. There are 8 verses in each stanza. In the Hebrew Scriptures, each verse begins with the same Hebrew letter for that stanza. (Aleph, Beth, ...). The Psalm is **devoted to the subject of God's word**. Except for 2 or 3 verses out of the 176, in every verse there is a reference to Scripture. Either mentioning the **law**, or a synonym of the word Law – **Statutes, Precepts, Decrees, Promise, Commands**, etc. So it would have taken an amazing amount of time to compose this Psalm in the way that he did. The fact that the writer would put that much time and effort into writing this Psalm and arranging it the way that he did, is **evidence of his fascination with the Scripture and His love for God's word**. The writer declares his love for God's word many times. ***"I love your commands more than gold, more than pure gold."* (vs. 127)** That should be the attitude of **the heart for everyone who has chosen to be a servant of God**.

In verse 19, he writes: ***"I am a stranger on earth, do not hide your commands from me."* (vs. 19)**. We are born into this world. It is as if we are sent on a journey. Several places in Scripture we are presented with this image that we are "Aliens" in this world, stranger. This world is not our home, not our final destination. He understands that **the Scriptures are our guide to get us through life in this world**.

Now, with 176 verses we will not take the time to look at every verse. (What was I thinking?) I have gone through and found some helpful lessons for us to consider and for us to apply to our lives.

### **Read Vs. 1-16 (NIV)**

**The Scriptures are God's Word**. The writer is convinced that God is the source of the Scriptures. The Scriptures are not a collection of the opinions of humans. (Like you might find on Facebook) **God is not silent**. He has revealed **His heart**; He has **revealed His will** through the pages of Scripture. Notice how many references there are in these first 16 verses suggesting the Psalmist's conviction that God is the source of the Scriptures. As we approach the Scriptures ourselves we must **approach it with that same conviction**. If the Scriptures is in fact from God there is no room for negotiation about the content of the Scriptures. If God is the source, the Scriptures are TRUTH!

**The Scriptures are intended to be obeyed. (vs. 2-4)**. People turn to the pages of the Scriptures for different reasons. Some are legitimate – for comfort and hope. Sometimes someone may be looking for a quick **"Pick Me Up"**. Sometimes people will turn to the Scriptures to support their theological position, or even political positions. They will take a verse out of context and twist it to get it to say what they want it to say. But the composer of this Psalm understands another reason to turn to the pages of the Scripture. The **Scriptures are intended to be obeyed**. (Vs. 4-5). There is **blessing for those who obey**, and there are **consequences for those who choose not to obey the commands of the Scriptures**. Vs. 6. ***"Then I would not be put to shame."*** This expression – **Put to shame** – appears often in the Old Testament and here in the book of Psalms. It could also be stated – to be **in total disgrace**. It connotes a state of **being abandoned by the Lord and condemned to utter ruin**, to be the same as an enemy of God. So the Scriptures are not intended for our reading enjoyment – like reading a novel. The Scriptures are given to us so that we can know God's will and Obey.

**The Scriptures are intended to be read, memorized and meditated upon**. As I said earlier, the Scriptures are a guide for us while we live as strangers in the world. So we must become familiar with the words of Scripture. We must read the Scriptures. A map will not do you any good on a trip if you leave it in the glove box, or don't turn you GPS on.

But our interaction with the Scriptures must be more than just surface reading. The Psalmist refers to two other practices that we must follow as we interact with the Scriptures. **Verse 11 – “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”** The Scriptures are given for the purpose of purifying our lives from sin. And one way that **the Scriptures help us to purify our lives from sin is by memorizing.** As we fill our hearts and minds with the words of Scripture, they will have more influence over us. God will use His word when we are tempted, or struggling in the area of character development to change us and transform us. Many people find it difficult to memorize Scripture. And I know that it is hard work. But it is so valuable to the process of purifying our lives from sin.

Another word that the psalmist uses to describe how we are to interact with Scripture is **“Meditate”**.

- **Vs. 15. I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways**
- **Vs. 23 Though rulers sit together and slander me Your servant will meditate on your decrees**
- **Vs. 97 Oh how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long**

To meditate is **more than just a casual reading.** I have practiced and encouraged others to read through the Scriptures. I have done that several times. Some of you may have done that also. I do believe it is a good practice. But sometimes when we are reading the Scriptures according to a schedule in order to get through it is a certain amount of time we may get in too much of a hurry and the words on the page don't get into our hearts. Eugene Petersen says it takes a special kind of reading skill for the words of Scripture to have their full impact on our lives. He calls it a **“dog with a bone” style of reading.** Just gnawing away at the bone. Sometimes we may be better off reading just a verse or two and think about it and chew on it, until we grasp its significance. In my devotional time, I have been using a resource called **Lectio 365**. It is available as an APP on our “Smart Phones.” The meditation for today was about Bernard of Clairvaux. Bernard was a 11<sup>th</sup> century monk who encouraged a practice of reading the Scriptures called **Lectio Divina**. It is a discipline of reading a piece of Scripture, slowly, repeatedly and reflecting on its truth for our lives. He suggests that as we read the Scriptures we should be assured that **the Bridegroom (Jesus) is present and is speaking His message to us.** The purpose of this contemplative style of reading is to **get the word from our Head to our Heart.** It's a short distance, about 18 inches, but it can be a long journey.

There are many other treasures in this Psalm that teach us the importance of the Scriptures. The Scriptures are a source of comfort in our times of sorrow. The Scriptures are a source of hope as we think about the future. The Scriptures provide us with wisdom for our lives. **Don't neglect the reading and study of the Scriptures.**

I would encourage you to take some time this week and read this Psalm. Don't read it all in one sitting. Maybe a stanza or two at a time. Learn the love the Psalmist has for the Scripture. Learn the blessings that are in store for those who are student of the Scripture. And learn the dangers of neglecting the words of the Scripture.

**Closing Prayer.**