

Psalm 119:33-40 || Ep. 925 – Getting Your Priorities on Track

Dwelling Richly Podcast – Summer 2024

[lightly edited transcript]

I think it's pretty natural for us to want to know what to ask God. The reason why I say that is because when you're a Christian, you have a sense, I hope, that you are in a relationship with God. You have a connection to God. Every time we go back through and we read the accounts in the Bible, when people talk about God, it's a relationship.

He's communicating with Adam, He's communicating with Eve, He's communicating with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and so on. They're communicating with Him, and throughout the Bible, we see that it's not just this one-way street of God talking and God doing, but it is His people connecting with Him, talking to Him, engaging with Him.

So, when we study the Bible, and that's what this summer's series is all about—how to study the Bible—we should be in the Bible with the sense of being in a relationship with God. I think it's natural then that we should know how to talk to Him, how to engage with Him.

Because of who we are and because of that relationship, and how beautiful it is, and how loved we know we are, we know that we can come to God and we can ask. That's what I want to talk about today. When we're in the Bible, when we're studying the Bible, how does studying the Bible help us learn how to have a relationship with Him? And in particular, how does studying the Bible help us, inform us, and teach us how to ask? What to ask, right? And how to improve our questions and talking to God.

That's what we're going to talk about today. Welcome back to the podcast. My name is Jennifer Richmond. This is the Dwelling Richly podcast. In this podcast, we are all about dwelling in the Word, letting the Word dwell in us richly, and really focusing on the idea that it's definitely different than just reading the Bible or reading a devotional about the Bible.

We want to let the Word of Christ dwell in us richly, like it says in Colossians 3:16. Our goal is to return the favor by dwelling in the Word, not just doing Bible study or simply reading the Word of God like a checklist. No, we want to dwell in the Word, right? We move into the Word of God, just like we live and we're in a relationship with Him.

So, like we live and we love God with our heart, our soul, our mind, and our strength, we want to do the same thing in how we get into the Word of God. That's what we're all about. That's what this summer series has been all about. At the beginning of the summer, we kicked off with some basic principles of how to study the Bible, how to avoid treating the Bible like a self-help book. If you want to listen to that, go back to episode 907, season nine, episode seven of the series. We were in 1 John chapter two when we talked about that.

We also talked earlier in this series about how to read the Bible like you are in a conversation with God. That was episode eight of this series. We've talked about how to read the Bible and how to avoid reading the Bible with a filter, to be at least aware of the filter we might bring into the Bible. We discussed how to use and not use the Bible in episodes 11 and 12.

So, we've done a lot in this series and I'm really excited as we continue on. Right now, we are going through Psalm 119 and using it as our platform to love God's Word, enjoy Psalm 119, and think through it as we're going through, letting it prompt our thinking about how we would study the Bible. Because that's what this whole episode series has been all about.

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If you're not already there, please open your Bible and join me. We're going to be in Psalm 119 again today. I'll be going through verses 25-32, reading primarily from the English Standard Version and also referring to a couple of other versions to help us with that.

As always, I leave show notes for you. Depending on where you are getting the podcast and listening, you might be on Apple iTunes, Spotify, Audible, Amazon Prime, Podbean, or YouTube. Hello to everybody, no matter where you're listening from. Leave a comment, say hi. The easiest and quickest way for me to see your comments is actually through my YouTube channel, which is just Jennifer Garrett Richmond on YouTube. If you haven't followed me there yet, I would love to have that follow to see you and see that channel grow.

Let's go ahead and get into God's Word and talk through this next passage from Psalm 119. I'll read it, listen along, and let's get into the Word together.

Psalm 119, beginning at verse 25: "My soul clings to the dust; give me life according to your word. When I told of my ways, you answered me; teach me according to your statutes. Make me understand the way of your precepts, and I will meditate on your wondrous works. My soul melts away for sorrow; strengthen me according to your word. Put false ways far from me and graciously teach me your law. I have chosen the way of faithfulness; I set your rules before me. I cling to your testimonies, O Lord; let me not be put to shame. I will run in the way of your commandments when you enlarge my heart."

We want to talk again about principles of how to study the Bible. Psalm 119 is such a great roadmap for that. Each section of this Psalm is grouped by a letter of the alphabet. We're in Dalet, the fourth section. The Hebrew alphabet's letter is Dalet, and it's the fourth section of this psalm, which helps us remember it as well.

So, what I want to think about again today is how we approach God and what we ask of God. If you'll notice, as you go back through this psalm, you'll see David not just asking God in a softer way, but he's demanding of God. He's saying, "Do this, do that." Let's highlight the specific things he says, the commands or demands of God. He's requesting very forcefully here.

Let's take a look at each section and highlight those. If you're taking notes, highlight those yourself, write it in your Bible or notes, and listen to these as I say them aloud again to you.

Verse 25: "Give me life according to your word." Verse 26: "Teach me your statutes." Verse 27: "Make me understand the way of your precepts." Verse 28: "Strengthen me according to your word." Verse 29: Bonus, two things he asks: "Put false ways far from me and graciously teach me your law." Verse 31: "Let me not be put to shame." Verse 32: "I will run in the way of your commandments when you enlarge my heart."

David's first request of God in this passage is talking about his life, his nefesh, his soul. He's saying it clings to the dust. We know from God's Word that He created us from the dust and we turn to dust. He's saying, "My soul clings to the dust." In other words, I'm on the edge of death. It's very tenuous, my life. He says, "Give me life according to your word." This is the highest calling we can have. You can have that today. Ask God, "God, I want life according to your word. Give me that today."

"When I told of my ways, you answered me. So teach me your statutes." This is the anticipation and expectation David has of God. Let's make that our request too. When we're studying the Bible, say with confidence to God, "Teach me your statutes. I want an ordered life. I want a life that's in alignment with you. So teach me." Have that expectation and go to God with that command, demand, and request.

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Verse 27: "Don't just teach me, but make me understand." It's one thing to have the statutes written down and see them, but I want to understand them.

Verse 28: "My soul melts away for sorrow." In the deepest times of sorrow, sadness clinging to life barely, strengthen me. There have been times in my life where my soul feels like it's melting away because of overwhelming sorrow. Strengthen me, make me understand, teach me your statutes, everything in accordance with your word. That's how we study the Bible. That's our hope. That's what we look to.

Verse 26: "Put false ways far from me." I don't want to be distracted by my interpretation, my understanding, what the world wants to inject into my life, or what anything else has to say. I come straight to the source and say, "I don't want falsehood. Put it far away from me, God, and graciously teach me your law." I want to be oriented to your law, God.

Verse 30: David reiterates the fact that he's chosen the way of faithfulness. He's set your rules before me. It's not just God magically ordaining everything. It's because he's made a commitment to choose the way of faithfulness, not falsehood. Set God's rules before me. Verse 31: Cling to God's testimonies. "Oh Lord, let me not be put to shame." Don't let anything make me ashamed, Lord, because I don't have falsehood. I pursue faithfulness and your word.

Verse 32: "I will run in the way of your commandments when you enlarge my heart." I'm not just going to walk in your way, which is a good thing to do. I'm going to run. That's confidence. I don't have to move slowly and carefully, worried about anything. I'm confident because you've strengthened me. You've been gracious to me. I don't have shame. I'm not in hiding, wondering what to do next. You will enlarge my heart. The NIV is helpful here because we're not talking about God literally enlarging our heart; it's a figure of speech. The NIV clarifies this by saying, "broaden my understanding." Another way of broadening our understanding is when God enlarges our heart.

Friends, this is how we study the Bible. How do I study the Bible? Ask good questions. Go to the source and the wise people who have gone before us and asked good questions. This is a great way to orient your life. Let me give you a tip: Take each one of these requests, commands, demands, or questions of God, write it on a piece of paper, put it on a post-it note or an index card, take a picture of it so you have it on your phone. Write it out and put it around your house. Put it on your mirror, in your car, in your wallet. Tape it to your friend's forehead so you'll see it.

Put it out where you'll see it throughout your day. Let it go back through your thinking: "Give me life. Teach me your statutes. Make me understand. Strengthen me according to your word. Put false ways far from me. Graciously teach me your law. Let me not be put to shame." Be expectant and almost like there's a question behind it, "Enlarge my heart," demanding of God that He would please enlarge his heart. Be expectant, expecting God to enlarge your heart for understanding His word. It's the highest calling and the greatest thing you can possibly do. Don't be distracted by anything.

We've had incredibly distracting news come out. I'm recording this just days after, a day after, two days after, the attempted assassination of our former President Trump. Praise God for sparing his life. This is reorienting me back. I don't live in shame. I don't have fear. I don't have false ways near me. I'm asking God to put them far away from me, and I come back to God, "Please graciously teach me your law. Help me understand."

That's what this is all about. That's what this podcast is all about. Thank you for listening today. Leave a comment, say hi, give me a five-star rating, all the good things. Invite others to share this. Share this on your

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social media. If I post it, share that post again. It helps get the word out, helps get people back into God's word, and empowers them to study it and study it well.

Thank you so much for being a part of it today. I look forward to being back here again with you real soon. Know that you are loved and you are prayed for. We'll be back here again with you real soon. Bye-bye for now.