

# Psalm 119:73-80 || Ep. 930 – My Small Life in God’s Big Hands

Dwelling Richly Podcast – Summer 2024

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[lightly edited transcript]

Hey, welcome back. This is the Dwelling Richly podcast, and this is Jennifer. I'm Jennifer, and we are continuing on in our series, How to Study the Bible. We've kind of answered more than just how, but why we study the Bible, and maybe when or under what circumstance might we study the Bible, how not to study the Bible. So it's been more than just how to study the Bible. It's just how to approach the Bible. And I love that you're here because you're interested in getting the answer to that question. I think a lot of people I talk to are in that same love for the word of God, for your faith in Christ. You're in the same love boat, in a sense. That's kind of an awkward way of saying it, but we're all in that same boat together. We love God's word. We love being a Christian and our faith in Christ and our fellowship we have in church. But how? How do we do it better? And I love the heart and desire that we have as a community to do it right and do it well and do it better and keep on growing in our faith, right?

I'm hearing from you, and I appreciate that. I love hearing from you that you have questions and you want to grow and learn more. And so today we're going to talk a little bit more about that. And last time or the time before that, I mentioned a little surprise that I have coming up. And I'll talk about that again at the end of today's episode, so stay tuned for that. But today we're continuing on in Psalm 139. We're actually going to talk about Psalm 139, but we're not in that Psalm today, are we? We are continuing through Psalm 119. And today we'll pick up at verse 73. I'll read from the English Standard Version today and listen to God's Word. Just let it met. Even if this is all you do is just hear God's Word read to you, you're going to gain so much. So if you have to leave after this, it would be a pity to lose you, but come back and finish the rest, but at least listen to God's word. Let's get into it together. And then we'll talk about some more ideas on how to study the Bible from the English Standard Version, Psalm 119, beginning at verse 73.

Your hands have made me and fashioned me. Give me understanding that I may learn your commandments. Those who fear you shall see me and rejoice because I have hoped in your word. I know, O Lord, that your rules are righteous and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me. Let your steadfast love comfort me according to your promise to your servant. Let your mercy come to me that I may live, for your law is my delight. Let the insolent be put to shame because they have wronged me with falsehood. As for me, I will meditate on your precepts. Let those who fear you turn to me, that they may know your testimonies. May my heart be blameless in your statutes that I may not be put to shame.

Such beautiful words. So let's go back to the beginning and talk about what we introduced at the very opening of this study through Psalm 119. This Psalm has some unique features. One of them being, it's the longest chapter in the Bible, 176 verses. And that's pretty unique right there. But what's especially interesting, more than just unique, is that this psalm is grouped in eight-verse chunks, little passages, small little verses together. And so the entire psalm has 22 sections that correspond with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

Today we come to the 10th letter of the Hebrew alphabet. That letter is unique because it is the smallest letter indicator in the entire Hebrew alphabet. That letter, you might be seeing it as you read through your own Bible, is the letter Yod. In Hebrew, when you write it, it looks like a little apostrophe, a little bit like an apostrophe. And you can think of an apostrophe. That's a really small mark that you might write. Well, Yod is very small as well.

The reason I want to take the time to talk about this letter and that it's the 10th letter and a very small letter is that the author, whether it's David or Ezra or Jeremiah, was intentional on the content of this particular stanza. This group of eight verses is oriented around this letter Yod. The first word of every line in this section, as is for every one of the sections of Psalm 119, begins with the letter Yod. If you read it in the Hebrew, you can see

## Psalm 119:73-80 || Ep. 930 – My Small Life in God’s Big Hands

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that. It gets hidden when you read it in English, because we have to translate it, and our words don't start off the same. But if you read through in the Hebrew, you'll see it. It's pretty cool. I encourage you to go to the Hebrew. I'll go ahead and leave a link here to a Hebrew alphabet page that has the Hebrew Bible on one side and the English Bible on the other. You'll be able to see a little bit better when you do it that way. You'll just see this repeated letter, Yod, Yod, Yod.

At the beginning of each one, for example, verse 73 says, "Your hands have made and fashioned me." The word "your hands" is the word "yadaka," and it begins with the Y, the Yod, the little Yod, yadaka. The next verse, verse 74, says, "Those who fear you shall see me and rejoice." Depending on your translation, it's actually one of the reasons why I really appreciate the English Standard Version and the New American Standard Version as well. Because they keep the syntax, which is the order of the words, in this order, it really helps, especially because of this whole starting the stanzas off with the letter of the alphabet. The phrase "those who fear you" is the word in Hebrew, Yereheka. My Hebrew pronunciation is not great. I try my best. So those of you out there who speak Hebrew, my apologies. I do my best on that. But that word Yereheka means "those who fear you." And it starts with the Yod, exactly, the little teeny tiny.

The third verse in this group, the 10th group of Psalm 119, starts with "those who fear you shall see me and rejoice." That's verse 70. Oh, I'm sorry. I should have gone to verse 75. Verse 75 says, "I know, O Lord," where the word "I know" is yadati. Yad comes from the root word yada in Hebrew. So you get the point. Ya for the Yoda and each of the beginning words of this Psalm. Isn't that great? right? Okay, that's cool. A little trivia, I guess.

Here's why I think it's particularly important. The author of this psalm didn't just do that by chance. He was intentional. He took the time to make sure every single first word of this group of verses starts with Yod. Let's go back to the very first idea in verse 73. "Your hands have made and fashioned me." Think about what it would mean that the hand of God, the idea that God made me. If you're like me and you've ever been outside and looked up at the stars, you might have what the psalmist had asked as well. What is man that you are mindful of him, right? You look up at the stars, you look at the heavens, and you think, my goodness, I'm so small in comparison. The writer here, I believe, is making that big comparison and then using the smallest letter of the alphabet to help us to remember our smallness and God's greatness. He uses the Yod throughout this entire chunk to help us to see that. And you miss it when you read it in English.

When we think about the idea here of our summer study, that we're working on ways to study the Bible, how to study the Bible, how we approach the Bible, I want us to gain the skill of being attentive to the details. Obviously, we can just read the Bible and enjoy it and be blessed by it. But the enriched study that happens when we are attentive to detail, when we take the time to read something once through and then pause and think, and then go back through it and read it again. Because it was probably on the third or fourth pass through, as I read this passage, that that concept connected with me when I started realizing, wait a minute, Yod is the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet. He opens with the biggest thing, God's hands, making and fashioning us. And he's using that juxtaposition, that striking difference between the bigness of God and the smallness of who we are to make a point. And what's that point? Let's continue reading.

"Your hands have made me and fashioned me." What's beautiful about this is it brought me immediately back to Psalm 139. Psalm 139 is a psalm that we read that God made us. We are created and we are fearfully and wonderfully made. We are made in the image of God. That truth comes through in Psalm 139. When I read this little portion right here, "Your hands have made me and fashioned me and give me understanding," it reminded me at the very beginning of Psalm 139. "O Lord, you have searched me and you know me before a word is on my tongue. You know everything about me. Everywhere I go, you're there in front of me, behind me." In verse

## Psalm 119:73-80 || Ep. 930 – My Small Life in God’s Big Hands

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13, it says, "You created my inmost being. You knit me." Psalm 139, written by David, echoes this idea here. "Your hands made me and fashioned me." What's the result of that? "Give me understanding." You know everything about me. You're the one who can give me understanding. Why? What's the end of that? What's the goal of that? That I may learn your commandments.

Verse 74 says, "Those who fear you will see me and rejoice because I have hoped in your word." What was his hope? That he would get understanding and that he might learn the commandments. Isn't that beautiful? Then he's saying, look, God, I do this for the purpose of your glory. He says in verse 75, "I know, O Lord, that your rules are righteous and that in faithfulness, you afflicted me." Do you remember before? In this psalm, he talked about being afflicted. In fact, in verse 61 and verse 71, he simply said, "I was afflicted." But now he's saying it was the Lord who afflicted him. Later on in the psalm, in verse 107, he's going to say that he's severely afflicted, but he's thankful for it. He knows that God's rules are righteous, and he knows that those who fear him are going to look to him and then rejoice because he has hope in his word.

In verse 76, we see another familiar word, "the steadfast love of God." The *chesed* of God occurs seven times in Psalm 119. In verse 41, verse 64, right here in verse 76, and then we'll see it again four more times. "Let your steadfast love, your *chesed* comfort me according to your promise to your servant." He says, "Let your mercy, which is connected to his steadfast love, come to me that I might live, for your law is my delight. I delight in your law." I love being in your law, right? Just like we are trying to be today, right? Love being in God's law.

He brings up the idea of insolent. We've talked about this a couple of times before, but he said, "Let the insolent be put to shame because they wrong me with falsehood." There's no reason for that. As for me, I'll just keep on meditating on your precepts. Verse 79, "Let those who fear you, turn to me that they may know your testimonies." Verse 80, "May my heart be blameless in your statutes. Why? That I may not be put to shame." Because in verse 78, he says, "Let the insolent be the ones to be put to shame. Those arrogant people, let them be put to shame. But my heart remains blameless. Why? I'm in your word. How could a young man keep his way up here? Keep it according to your word." He said that earlier. "So may my heart be blameless in your statutes that I may not be put to shame. As small as I am, like the little yod, the small thing that I am, your hands have made me the biggest in the universe. You, oh God, have made me. I am very small, but people will look to me, my small little life, because I fear you, they will fear you, and then they will also be able to rejoice."

He's asking that his entire life will be a testimony to God. As you consider how to better study the Bible, how to get into God's word, I pray that you will have an attention for detail, that you will be like the writer here and think about the tiniest thing that we are and know that that can make a big difference when we make it about who God is and we have fear and love and reverence for God's word. I pray that you'll meditate on this more and more today, that that will be an encouragement to you as well.

Thank you for being here with me in this our short episode today and know as always that you are loved and prayed for and I look forward to being back here again with you real soon. Bye-bye for now.

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### Bible Verses Referenced

Psalm 139, Psalm 119:73-80, Psalm 119:61, Psalm 119:71, Psalm 119:107, Psalm 119:41, Psalm 119:64

# Psalm 119:73-80 || Ep. 930 – My Small Life in God’s Big Hands

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## Growing Deeper...

1. Reflect on the significance of God's creation and your place in it.
2. Read Psalm 119:73-80 and Psalm 139, focusing on the details.
3. Practice attentive and detailed Bible study in your daily routine.
4. Share insights from this study with your community or Bible study group.
5. Meditate on God's steadfast love and seek to understand His commandments.