

Psalm 119:97-104 || Ep. 933 – When You Need Refreshment

Dwelling Richly Podcast – Summer 2024

[lightly edited transcript]

Hey, welcome back. This is Jennifer, and this is the Dwelling Richly podcast. We are continuing our study through Psalm 119 with a focus on how to study the Bible. Of course, it's more than just studying the Bible. We don't always have time to sit around and study, but we do want to know God, so we go to His word. We want to grow in our faith, so we go to His word. We want to grow in our self-discipline and in being in fellowship with God, so we go to His word.

The whole focus of this summer series, "How to Study the Bible," has been not just about studying the Bible, though that's a succinct title, but about taking the word from Colossians 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly," and returning the favor by re-dwelling in the word. We go back into the word and dwell in it. We don't just do Bible study; we dwell. Exactly. Good job.

I'm excited to continue in our movement through Psalm 119 and the ebb and flow of being in the word together. This psalm has its own rhythm and movement as well, showing us the joy, delight, anguish, fear, and longing of the psalmist—whether that was David, Ezra, Nehemiah, Jeremiah, or someone else—we're not entirely sure. But we do see his joy and delight as well as his anguish and longing. There is this ebb and flow, all resolved in the delight we discussed last time: the delight in His word.

I love Psalm 119:92, which was in our last passage: "If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction." I would have been overwhelmed and died from my misery if it weren't for your law.

Now, that brings us to the 13th letter of the Hebrew alphabet, an interesting letter: mem. This letter has a value of 40 in Hebrew understanding, and it can be written in two forms: open or closed. When it's open, it's in the middle or the beginning of a word; when it's closed, it's at the end.

Maybe you're like me and you're enjoying writing out this psalm in Hebrew—that's been helping me learn my Hebrew alphabet a little bit better, although I still have a lot to learn. But this is a great section of scripture as we participate in understanding it with the Holy Spirit as our guide.

I'm going to go ahead and read this whole section first to you from the English Standard Version, and then we're going to talk about it. So grab your Bible, and let's read Psalm 119:97-104.

"Oh, how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day. Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts. I hold back my feet from every evil way in order to keep your word. I do not turn aside from your rules, for you have taught me. How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore, I hate every false way."

Love it, love it, love it! Okay, here we go. Mem, as I mentioned, is the 13th letter of the Hebrew alphabet and has the numerical value of 40. The idea of mem is connected to the word mayim, which means water. I opened with this visual of the ebb and flow of Psalm 119 on purpose, because it's similar to how water ebbs and flows in the sea, a lake, a river, or even in your cup. The emotion and movement of Psalm 119 have that feeling of mayim, of water, as it moves and flows.

Let's take a closer look at Psalm 119:97. The goal of this series isn't to exegete or break down each verse in depth, though that's something I'm inspired to possibly do with you in the future. The purpose here is to take the word we're reading and use it to help us better study the word, delight in the word, and grow in the word.

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When we read verse 97, “Oh, how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day,” it connects back to verse 92, where the psalmist says that the law had been his delight, and if it hadn’t been, he would have perished. Here, he continues this idea, expressing his love for the law—his focus and meditation on it all day.

As a result of this love for God’s law, the psalmist gains wisdom and understanding above three groups of people. First, his enemies—those who could have overtaken him—are outsmarted because he has God’s law. For us, we may not have literal enemies in the “I hate Jennifer” club, but we do have an adversary. We are in a spiritual battle, and to have wisdom above our enemies is to know and love God’s word.

We study the Bible offensively and defensively. Offensively, to go out into the world armed with God’s word, and defensively, to protect ourselves from the world’s attacks. The psalmist says that God’s commandment makes him wiser than his enemies because it is ever with him. Nothing else in this transient world is as enduring as God’s word. Enemies may come and go, but God’s word is with us forever.

In verse 99, he says, “I have more understanding than my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation.” Not just casually reading or listening to sermons, but truly meditating on God’s word gives us greater understanding. This means weighing everything a teacher says against the truth of God’s word, whether in a secular or biblical setting.

Verse 100 says, “I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts.” This isn’t just about knowing more than old people; it’s about having greater understanding than those who should know more because they’re older. As we teach children, we should remind them that if they’re in God’s word, they can have more understanding than the elders in their life.

Verse 101 says, “I hold back my feet from every evil way in order to keep your word.” Even though evil ways are available, the psalmist holds back because he wants to keep God’s word. In verse 102, “I do not turn aside from your rules, for you have taught me,” he acknowledges that God has been his correction, like a shepherd guiding him.

Verse 103 expresses the sweetness of God’s word: “How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth.” In that day and age, honey and dates were forms of sweetness, and the psalmist finds God’s word sweeter than anything else.

Finally, verse 104 says, “Through your precepts, I get understanding; therefore, I hate every false way.” The psalmist delights in God’s word, finds it sweet, and rejects anything false.

I love this psalm, this mem, this mayim, this water, because it reminds me of Jesus as the living water. John 7:38 says, “Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” We have this living water in us when we are in Christ, when we delight in Him and His word.

Not only do we have God’s word written down in Psalm 119, but we also have access to the living word, Jesus Christ. Everything recorded in the New Testament teaches us about Christ and reminds us of the delight we have in knowing Him personally as our shepherd, savior, guide, Lord, and living water dwelling in us.

I pray that as you go back through and meditate on this psalm, you will find your delight in Jesus as our living water and delight in His commandments, precepts, laws, testimonies, rules, and word today as well.

God bless you as you continue in your study and enjoy being in God’s word together with your church, your friends, and me. Thank you for sharing, leaving a comment, and letting me know that you listened to this word today. I look forward to being back here with you again soon. Know that you are loved and prayed for. Bye-bye for now.