

# Psalm 119:105-112 || Ep. 934 – Taking the Bible Seriously

Dwelling Richly Podcast – Summer 2024

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[lightly edited from the podcast episode]

Hey, welcome back. This is Jennifer, and this is the Dwelling Richly podcast. I'm really glad you are back here with me today. We are continuing the study through Psalm 119. This is a part of the series that I've been doing this summer, just about how to study the Bible.

And we're using the Bible itself to teach us, to give us ideas and inspiration and reminders that we could take a lifetime to just say, Lord, teach me, help me understand your word. And it's such a great thing to do. So good for you. Thank you for joining me here today.

Go back and check out a few of the earlier episodes. We began our study in Colossians and we moved through 1 John. We did some in Proverbs and some in Psalms. And of course, we've been now in Psalm 119, which has 22 sections in it. It's one section for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

That brings us to the 14th letter. And that letter is “nun”, “nun”. So the N sound. Every word of the stanza, the “nun” section, the 14th section, every word of each of those 22 stanzas begins with that letter. It was a way of teaching people how to study the Bible. That's the whole point of this.

So that's what we're going to do. And as I read through, I think about what principle are we gaining here to help us better read the Bible, understand the Bible, love and joy, dwell in the Bible, and all that.

As I was reading today, I thought about the idea of seriousness. I know, seriousness. So being serious about our study of the Bible is an approach, a mindset of an approach that we can have.

I'm going to read the scripture with you right now. Grab your Bible and follow along. I'll read as I often do from the English Standard Version. You follow along, whatever version you're reading. We'll read through it, and then I'll go back through, and we'll kind of break it down a little bit. You know, the point of this study, once again, a reminder, is not to study this portion of the scripture. Although I'm, you know, we'll talk about a few of the words and things like that. The idea of this study is to read this passage and then have ideas that help us better study the Bible. That's the whole point. All right, are you ready? Here we go.

Psalm 119 verses 105 through 112.

Grab your Bible and follow along, or just listen and let God's word teach you as you hear it.

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. I have sworn an oath and confirmed it to keep your righteous rules. I'm severely afflicted. Give me life, O Lord, according to your word. Accept my free will offerings of praise, O Lord, and teach me your rules. I hold my life in my hand continually, but I do not forget your law. The wicked have laid a snare for me, but I do not stray from your precepts. Your testimonies are my heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart. I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever to the end.

All right. You know, this portion of the stanza of Psalm 119 opens up with probably a very familiar verse to most of us. And it's, your word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.

If you, like me, grew up loving Christian music, you probably remember the beautiful Amy Grant song. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. Remember that? Oh my goodness, Amy Grant. Such a beautiful, beautiful song.

Of course, when I first came across that first verse, I was reminded of it. It jolted back in time to that moment of hearing that song and how quickly it came back to me. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light unto my path. Of course, that's

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the whole idea of gaining, getting ideas, getting strength in how to study the Bible, is to think about what is God's word to me? What does it mean to me?

That will help me to study it. And so the psalmist here says, look, your word, talking to God, your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

You know, my husband and I just went camping. A beautiful, beautiful starry night. The moon was in that very teeny tiny little sliver. The stars shone brightly, but there was not a lot of moon to light the way, which is great for seeing the stars, but not great if you're trying to find your way back to your tent at night. When the moon is full, then it fills the sky with light. You hardly even need a light at all when you're out there. In fact, today, the day I'm actually recording this message is the full moon. Not only is it a full moon, but tonight is a blue moon and a super moon. Happens once every, I don't know, two years or so. But it's a unique night and we get this big, beautiful globe up in the sky, and it's going to look quite a bit larger than normal.

The psalmist says here that God's word illuminates his feet and his path. Now to illuminate the feet, you would take a light and you would shine it down low, right? And so you would see very close up where you're going. But a light to your path is something that's up and above, and it illuminates the whole path. So he's saying here, look, your word, God, it lightens up everything that's right here next to me, super close and tight to me, so I can see right where I'm going, right exactly in front of me. And it's a light to my path. It opens up the path far and wide ahead of me. All right.

Again, as I was reading through the Psalm, and I'm going to tip you off to the beginning here, the principle of how to study the Bible I want us to focus on in this particular stanza is the idea of taking God's word seriously and reverencing God's word as the light that it is, a light to our little feet as we're walking with it and a light that illuminates our entire path. But as I continue to reread this with you, I want you to hear how the psalmist talks about how seriously he takes his love and his need for God's word, this light that guides his feet up close and his entire path. He says, I have sworn an oath and confirmed it to keep your righteous rules. That is serious business to swear an oath and confirm it.

So when we think about how to study the Bible, I want to encourage you today to take it seriously and to go ahead and model your life after the psalmist here and take an oath. Take an oath to keep your righteous rules. Swear to it that you will keep God's rules. In order to do that, you would have to trust God's rules. You would have to be, you know, just joyfully in love with God and his rules to say, I am so willing to, I will swear an oath to keep them, right? And you will need to say that. You will need to say to God, I swear to you, God, I give you my absolute solemn word that I will follow your rules.

Maybe that means you are going to invite somebody else in with you into the seriousness of how to study the Bible. You're going to say to someone, you know what? I don't want to treat the Bible like a trivial thing. I'm prone to do that. There's a possibility I could say, oh, maybe I'll read the Bible today. Maybe I'll understand more. Maybe I'll grow in my faith, you know, or maybe I'll just scroll through Instagram and Facebook instead.

But when you bring someone else in and you say, look, I want to take it seriously about studying the Bible and loving God's word and being serious about my faith and my love for God's word, bring someone else in, swear that oath. Then he talks again about being severely afflicted, and of course, we've heard him talk about this quite a few times before, but he says it in verse 107, I'm not just afflicted, I'm severely afflicted. So give me life, O Lord. I'm beaten down, I'm beaten up. So give me life, O Lord, according to your word, your word that I've trusted is faithful and true. And he says, this is so beautiful, and it's only the second time it occurs in the Bible, this phrase, I accept my free will offerings.

We talk about free will offerings that occurs way back in the book of Exodus when Moses is telling people what God has said to do. And he says, look, I want you to bring everything to build God's tabernacle, God's holy place. And this was supposed to be a free will offering. You are not obliged to bring it. You bring it out of the joy of your heart, a free will

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offering to make God's place holy, and you relinquish your gold and your silver and your bronze and your fine linens and your silk and anything you have that's beautiful. You bring that in. We're going to use that to build God's temple. He talks about that in Exodus.

So here, the writer here of this psalm is saying, my free will offering is to praise you. I've sworn this oath to keep your word, and I just erupt in praise. And I want you, I'm asking you once again to teach me your rules. He says in verse 109, kind of echoing again what he said in verse 107, I'm severely afflicted. In verse 109, I hold my life in my hand continually. In other words, my life hangs in the balance. Things are not easy for me. This is

rough. I'm getting beaten up. He's talking, I think, literally about feeling physically attacked. But we know we relate to feeling physically, emotionally, spiritually, all the ways. Our own body will betray us and we can feel attacked by our own body, and we can feel afflicted by our own body, let alone the things that are going on around this world. So he says in verse 109, I hold my life continually in my hand, but I do not forget your law. In other words, I've taken it seriously. I could be distracted by everything that's going on around me in my life, but I take your law seriously. I do not forget your law.

Then he talks again about what's going on in his life. He says, the wicked, well, they laid a snare for me. That's how bad it is. They want to trip me up so I might lose sight and I won't see. But your word, he says in verse 105, remember, your word's a lamp to my feet. Your word's been a light to my path. So they might have laid a snare for me, but I don't stray from your precepts. Why? Because your word lit up the path. I'm aware of their little traps that they're trying to lay for me, right?

Then in verse 111, your testimonies are my heritage forever. There is nothing more serious and more beautiful and big than the idea of heritage. Heritage, you know, you might have gotten a... Maybe your mom or your dad passed away or an aunt or an uncle or grandparent, and you might have gotten a heritage from them in the sense of like a physical thing, like they passed along to you their home or some money or a car or other physical things. But you might also have had a heritage, which my sisters and I talk about this a lot. The biggest heritage we ever received was parents who passed down to us an incredible love, passion, desire, enthusiasm, and respect for God's word. We received that as a heritage. And above anything else we could have received from our parents, physical things changed. It's that heritage that we treasure the most.

The psalmist is saying the same thing in verse 111. Your testimonies are my heritage forever. Everything else could pass away, but I'm serious about how I value God's word. It's my heritage forever. He says in the next phrase, for they are the joy of my heart. All the testimonies, everything that's in your law, everything that reveals what a testimony does, because a testimony is not just the law that says, do this, don't do that, or the guidance that God gives us like in Proverbs and things like that. Testimonies are things that have been shown to be true because someone has lived it out. And he's seeing that, and he says, now that's my heritage. It's my heritage forever. It's the joy of my heart.

In verse 112, I incline my heart to perform your statutes. My joy of my heart is your heritage. The testimonies are my heritage forever and ever. So I incline my heart. I turn my heart in a way. I lean into my heart in a sense. I lean into it to perform your statutes, and I do that forever. He says, your testimonies are my heritage forever. I incline my heart to perform your statutes. How long? Forever. To the end. To the absolute fullest end.

So my encouragement for us today is to think through how weighty we take, weightily, is that a word? How much weight we give, seriousness we give to God's word in our life. Does it weigh on us in the sense of, I treasure this above everything else. I take it so seriously. I'm willing to make a vow, a sworn oath, and confirm it. And to write it out, if you need to, speak it out, if you need to, talk to God about it, if you need to. I encourage you to invite somebody else into your life that you can make that oath to, to say, I vow to take God seriously.

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While we're talking about it, this has been coming up at church. I've been talking to the youth about this. I talked to the women in women's Bible study, and I talked to the whole church when I had the opportunity, and I'll talk to you. Bring your Bible to church. Bring your Bible to church. Yes, I know you have it on your phone. Yes, I know you have it on your tablet. Yes, I know you have it on the... No, that's not your Bible. You have access to a Bible in that way. Please bring your Bible to church. Bring your Bible to Bible study. Bring your Bible with you wherever you go. Don't leave home without your Bible. Let it be a weight in a good sense around you, how seriously you take God's word. Like I said earlier, take that oath, follow in the footsteps of the author of Psalm 119. Swear an oath and confirm it, a reminder to keep your righteous rules, to honor them as the light and the lamp that they are, lighting up our little feet down low, all the little nooks and crevices and the snares and the traps, and that light to the entire path up high.

I will close with this also reminder, or not reminder, because I didn't say it earlier. The letter “nun”, this letter “nun”, is a picture of someone who is kneeling, bowing down, a picture of bowing down. “nun” is unique among alphabet letters, Hebrew alphabet letters. There are just a few, and “nun” is one of them that has a beginning type of way of writing it, and it also is slightly different when it ends. If it's at the end of a word, it's a little bit different to look at than it is if it's at the beginning of a word.

Again, I try not to do Bible study in this, but I just want to close with this. “nun” at the beginning of the word, like all of the first words of this stanza, is the kneeling “nun”. “nun” at the end of a letter is a standing “nun”. When we kneel in faithfulness and we stand in obedience, it's the opening and the closing in a sense of how we respect and seriously take God's word. Isn't that beautiful? “nun” is that visual reminder of that as well. All right, that'll wrap us up for today.

As always, I enjoy being here with you, having this time with you. Thank you for leaving a comment. Let me know you've been listening. Ask a question, maybe even participate in the "So Glad You Asked" Bible study series that I'm doing. It's a little question-and-answer series I'm doing right now. Submit a question to that, please. Take time to enjoy the other series that you can find on my website called "Just Rediscovering Dad," and it's the messages from the early 1980s that my dad gave at an adult Bible study school class at our church. I found those old recordings on cassette and I've been remastering those and making those available in that series.

Then, of course, this series, "How to Study the Bible." So thank you for being with me and enjoying this time together. I look forward to being with you again real soon when we move on to the 15th letter of the Hebrew alphabet, Samech, and we talk about that when it comes up again.

All right. Know that you are loved. Know that you are prayed for. And I look forward to being back here again with you real soon. Bye-bye for now.