

# Psalm 119:121-128 || Ep. 936 – Eyes that Long for God

## Dwelling Richly Podcast – Summer 2024

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[lightly edited from the podcast episode]

Welcome back. I'm Jennifer Richmond, and this is the Dwelling Richly podcast, where we love God, heart, soul, mind, and strength. We are women who enthusiastically and intentionally dwell in the Word and let the Word of Christ dwell in us richly. You can find Bible studies and teaching like this on my blog and right here on the podcast. So subscribe to this channel wherever you're listening and tap that little church bell. If there's a notification bell, you can click so you can get notified whenever I drop a new episode.

Let's go ahead and get into the Word. All right. Well, again, welcome back. And this is the How to Study the Bible series. You might be thinking, I haven't heard you do that intro before. You're right. I have not done that intro for a while, and I'm bringing it back. I'm bringing it back. I kind of revisited some older podcasts and thought, you know what? I like that intro. I'm bringing that back. I'm bringing the music back. I'm bringing it all back. Here we are. And so, yeah, we're almost done. We're rounding the corner—hello, computer, hello—rounding the corner to being done with our study for the summer, which has been how to study the Bible.

And, you know, of course, we're in Psalm 119. Today we'll be opening up the 16th letter of the Hebrew alphabet, ayin, and digging into what that looks like. The entire concept of this study, just a quick review and reminder, especially for those of you who are new, is to take principles from the Word of God that help us better fulfill the exhortation from Colossians 3:16, which is the cornerstone foundational verse of this entire ministry, Dwelling Richly, where it says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in us richly."

We don't just do Bible study. We don't just check it off our list. We don't just read the Bible. We dwell in the Word. We make it a rich time in the Word, and we're careful that we don't just turn it into something we're trying to get done. The point of this particular study has been to focus on principles that teach us how we can study the Bible. I mentioned this, I think, in the last podcast, but I dig into the Word like this, really breaking down all the scripture for the particular passage we're on. But that's not the point of this study. And I've been thinking more and more that maybe it's time to do a deep dive, full-on study in Psalm 119.

If you've been following the podcast or my blog, you may have seen the Rediscovering Dad series that I started. I found my dad's cassettes from previous messages from way back in 1981 when he was teaching a Sunday school class at Newberry Park Baptist Church. I was in about eighth grade, maybe ninth grade. Anyway, it doesn't matter. The point is I found the cassettes, and I've been remastering those and posting them. Of course, most of the cassettes are from Psalm 119. Isn't that crazy? Here I am teaching it, working through it, and in God's beautiful, amazing divine providence, that's what happened.

So, all that to say, we are in a how to study the Bible mode. We're letting scripture inform us, teach us, and give us more principles on how to be better students of the Word, better dwellers in the Word. And that's what we're going to continue to do. Maybe at a future point, I'd like to integrate the teaching I got from my dad—eight lessons from him, unfortunately only those eight—and combine them with some of my own thoughts and studies to put together a full-on Bible study on Psalm 119. That's what I'm thinking about, praying about, and talking to the Lord about. It'll be a while before I do that, but I will continue to talk to the Lord and see what He leads me to do.

All right, let's go ahead and get into the Word. We're in Psalm 119, and we'll be in verses 121 through 128. I'll be reading today from the English Standard Version. A question came up recently, what kind of Bible should I be reading from? We've talked about this earlier in the series, and I say, read a Bible that you can read. How's that? There's a simple answer. Read a Bible that you can read, one that isn't so complicated that you can't understand it. The English Standard Version is written at about a 6th or 7th-grade reading level, believe it or not. No offense if you have trouble reading it, but it is. If you look it up, it's about a middle school level.

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There are other translations that are great too. You can read the New International Version, the New English Translation—I use both of those in my studies. The New American Standard is a little more challenging. The King James Version is chunky for sure. But what I like about the ESV is that it's literal enough to not interpret too much. Honestly, all translation is interpretation. You cannot move from one language to the next without some type of interpretation. But in my humble opinion, the English Standard Version is readable, and more often than not, I feel that it is more faithful to the original understanding and wording than other translations.

I find that even the NIV, which I enjoy, takes some liberties and does a little bit more of the heavy lifting for us. I would rather have the stricter reading of the word and work to understand it. ESV has its own challenges, and we can talk about that another time, but I like it. That's what I use the most, along with the NET and NIV. There you go. There's my little tidbit on that.

All right, let's continue on. I'm excited to talk about this one. We've got some great principles here today, so grab your Bible, follow along with whatever translation you are reading from. I will be putting in the show notes links to the Hebrew. If you'd like to practice and keep on working on your Hebrew, make sure you look for those. All right, let's go ahead and check this out.

Psalm 119, verses 121 through 128: "I have done what is just and right; do not leave me to my oppressors. Give your servant a pledge of good; let not the insolent oppress me. My eyes long for your salvation and for the fulfillment of your righteous promise. Deal with your servant according to your steadfast love, and teach me your statutes. I am your servant; give me understanding, that I may know your testimonies. It is time for the Lord to act, for your law has been broken. Therefore I love your commandments above gold, above fine gold. Therefore I consider all your precepts to be right; I hate every false way."

Good, good, good stuff. The reason why I paused there and made mention of putting a pin in verse 123, where it says, "my eyes," is that the word "my eyes" is actually what "ayin" means. The 16th letter of the Hebrew alphabet is the letter "ayin," and it means "eyes." By extension, it means to see, to look, to understand, and because of the holistic nature of the Hebrew language, it also means to obey. In the same way that "shema" means to hear, it doesn't just mean to hear; it means to listen and obey. So, "ayin" is "eye," and it means to see, to understand, and also to obey.

That's the connection there. Again, it's one of the reasons why I like the ESV, because they try their best to work with the syntax, which is the order of the words. We know Psalm 119 is organized so that the first letter of every word in the first word of every stanza begins with the letter, the theme letter, of that stanza. We're in the 16th letter of the alphabet, which is the letter "ayin," which means every single word begins with "ayin." In the ESV, for example, in verse 123, it says "my eyes," which is the "ayin." It's a slightly different form of that word, but it's the same root.

The principle I want us to see—ironically, "see"—as we're looking at this psalm is that there's actually going to be a couple. The first one is along the lines of a "let's make a deal" idea, because I want us, I want you, to go into God's word with the expectation that God is going to act, that God is going to do the right thing. We expect it. We come to the word and say, "All right, Lord, here's what's happening in my life. I'm bearing it on my shoulders, carrying it with me in a sense, but I'm going to set down that backpack full of whatever I've got going on in my life. I'm going to set it down and just approach your word for you. I'm going to set everything else down around me, get into your word, and approach it for who you are. I have an expectation that you are going to act."

Listen again, as I read it, how the psalmist has this expectation that God is going to act. This means he knows who God is. He has a right understanding of who God is. He has seen God act in the past. He has faith that he's going to act in the future, and he is coming to God with a righteous heart. He is taking what the New Testament teaches us in 1 John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." So the psalmist is going, and if you've been listening to my dad's messages, you know my

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dad believed that Ezra wrote Psalm 119. Please listen to his messages. They are so good. I wish he had done one on this section. I would have been using it to help me.

But the psalmist is coming with that heart of having been cleansed. He knows he's right with God. He's confident. He's not constantly doubting or feeling unworthy. No, he's confident. He knows he has the same amount of confidence in his own righteousness, not out of pride, but very humbly before God, because he knows God, and he knows he's on the side of what's right with God. So listen to what he says: "I have done what is just and right,"—confidence, not kowtowing, not whining—"do not leave me to my oppressors. Look, God, I'm on your side here. Don't leave me. Don't abandon me to the bad guys."

And then in verse 122, he has this approach of expectation from God: "Give your servant a pledge of good; let's make a deal." The idea here is like a mortgage payment, a payment that is surety, that holds everything together. "God, give me that pledge, everything on the line of good, and don't let the insolent oppress me." Then in verse 123: "My eyes long for your salvation." The idea here is someone who is looking out across the horizon with expectation, waiting, knowing for sure it's going to happen, longing for your salvation. "I'm looking out and I know that I know that you're going to come for me for the fulfillment of your righteous promise." In your Bible, if you're taking notes right now, I want you to make a connection. I want you to underline the word "salvation" and connect it to "righteous promise." What is our salvation? It is a righteous promise, and the psalmist is fully expectant that it is going to happen. He has that much faith and trust, no doubt at all.

And then he says, "Let's make a deal," in a sense. It's not really that word, but it's "deal with your servant according to your steadfast love." In other words, "I know I'm on the right side here, but I won't put myself up for surety. I'm not putting myself up as a pledge. You deal with me according to your steadfast love, because there is nothing more faithful, more sure, more true than the chesed, the steadfast love of the Lord that never ceases, His mercies that never come to an end. Deal with me according to your steadfast love, because there is nothing more faithful than that, and the psalmist knows it."

And what? "Teach me your statutes. While I'm sitting here waiting, I have absolute expectation in you. Just continue to teach me your statutes. I'm sitting here in the form of a servant. Give me understanding, then. I'm waiting. I'm ready to learn. Give me understanding that I may know your testimonies." Now, I love this idea of testimonies, because the idea of testimonies is something that's already happened that I can put forth so that other people can see, "Oh, God did that." When we say, "I testify to this," we're putting up our hand in a pledge, like we're in a courtroom and we're testifying that it's true. "I may know your testimonies, the things that prove you to be true. I want to constantly know them."

And then in verse 126, kind of this middle sandwich, if you think of it that way, of this little section, "It's time for the Lord to act. I have an expectation, and it's time for you, Yahweh, to act. Your law has been broken." Again, we go back to how we study the Bible. We study the Bible by confessing our sins, cleaning that slate before Him, and coming before Him with the expectation that He is going to act on our behalf out of righteousness, out of His steadfast love, and it's time. So I can come before God, and it almost sounds like we're being too demanding because we want to be careful and be super humble. But I want us to approach the Word of God and our time with God with boldness and say, "God, I know I'm right here because I'm fully confessed up. I've laid it all out. I've been willing to be taught by you, and you've continued to teach me. Therefore, let me just tell you right now, I'm 100% sure of this as a result of everything I've said." That's the word "therefore." "I love your commandments, and this is how much I love them: above gold, above fine gold." Gold's great, but fine gold is even better, right?

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And then the last verse: "Therefore, as a result of everything I've said, I consider all your precepts to be right. And just so we're clear, I hate every false way." I hate it if it's in me, and I hate it if it's in you, and I hate it if it's in the world. Why? Because I want to be on God's side. I don't want to be on the side of wrong, the oppressors, the insolent.

This is why we have to approach the Word with expectation, where we go to God's Word with the idea of how do I study the Bible? How do I get into the Bible? We pray, we confess our sins, we ask God to open up our heart, clean us out, and then we have an expectation that He is going to act. Again, with the focus on Ayin, the 16th letter of the alphabet, verse 123, where is he looking? He's looking out toward that horizon: "My eyes long for your salvation, for the fulfillment of your righteous promise." As you study the Word, as you pray, as you become a better student, better dweller in the Word, that could be your prayer: "I long for your salvation, Lord. Help me understand your will. Help me understand your way. I have an expectation that you're going to act. And I'm telling you right now, Lord, this is time. It's time to act."

So get on your knees—get on your knees for yourself, get on your knees for your family, get on your knees for your husband, and get on your knees for your church. Ask God, "God, break through my church, break through our groups, break through my own heart. I want to be on your side. I long for your salvation. I look for it. My eyes are up for you. I don't want anything else in the way. I hate every false way."

As we approach the Bible and decide what it looks like to study and dwell in God's Word, let's approach it with that type of boldness and expectation from God. As always, I love being in the Word with you. Leave a comment, say hi, tell me what you're learning, engage back, let me hear from you. And know as always, you are loved and you are prayed for. I look forward to being back here again with you real soon. Bye-bye for now.