

BT 381 Psalms / BA.

BT 538 Poetic & Wisdom Literature / MA

Book 5 (Psalms 107–150)

- **Law: Deuteronomy**
- **Summary of Psalm: 150**
- **Festival Scrolls: Esther**

The conclusion of Esther which events were all leading up to, also occurred during the winter and they marked it forever for the Jewish people with the Festival of Purim.

And Purim is celebrated between the 13th and the 15th of Adar, which is the last month of the year, which again is right before Passover. So, the book of Esther has to do with this time period as well.

- **Season: Winter**
- **Themes: God's Acts and Accomplishments of Salvation**

The psalms in Book 5 have less of a common theme or setting than those in the other books. However, amidst the diversity of forms and settings, work appears more directly among these psalms than in other parts of the Psalter. Issues of economic creativity, business ethics, entrepreneurship, productivity, the work of raising children and managing a household, the proper use of power, and the glory of God in and through the material world all emerge in these psalms.

God Undergirds All Work and Productivity (Psalm 107)

Psalm 107 relates human economic endeavors to the world of God's creation. It is worth citing at length.

Some went down to the sea in ships, doing business on the mighty waters; they saw the deeds of the Lord, his wondrous works in the deep. For he commanded and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea. They mounted up to heaven, they went down to the depths; their courage melted away in their calamity; they reeled and staggered like drunkards, and were at their wits' end. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he brought them out from their distress; he made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed. Then they were glad because they had quiet, and he brought them to their desired haven. Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind. (Psalm 107:23–31)

Then as now, people went to sea for fishing and trading. Their ships were fragile, and they had little warning before storms surged. Their lives and livelihood depended on the weather. Notwithstanding our technological advantages, we, too, depend upon a multitude of factors beyond our control in much of our work. Perhaps the most honest thing anyone can say about success at work is, "I was fortunate." As Bill Gates remarked about the amazing success of Microsoft, "I was born at the right place and time." [3] To the believer, "fortunate" is a term to describe God's constant provision for our needs. Wringing success from the uncertainties inherent in our work depends a bit on skill (a gift from God in itself), a bit on hard work, and a lot on God's providence. Whatever our "desired haven" in life and work, "let us thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind." Perhaps James had this psalm in mind when he said, "You ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will we will do this or that'" (James 4:15).

A bit later, Psalm 107 adds further insight to this.

God turns a desert into pools of water, a parched land into springs of water. And there he lets the hungry live, and they establish a town to live in; they sow fields, and plant vineyards, and get a fruitful yield. By his blessing they multiply greatly, and he does not let their cattle decrease (Psalm 107:35–38).

God creates the conditions for life to thrive on earth. He can turn a desert into a pasture (or a pasture into a desert). Agriculture, including sowing crops and managing livestock, depends on God-given growth. Where agriculture prospers, towns arise. With the emergence of towns every kind of work appears. The urban economy provides all kinds of goods and services to a growing and diverse population. In an ancient economy, in addition to farmers and shepherds, a community would need potters, metalworkers, and scribes (to record commercial agreements and transactions, as well as laws and religious texts). The whole economy of any city, past or present, depends upon agricultural abundance, whether home-grown or through trade. When the world's farmer can grow more than his needs for his own subsistence, complex communities can thrive. And this comes from God, who waters the dry land (Ps. 65:9, Genesis 2:5).

Psalm 107 thus covers economic activity on both land and sea, and asserts that God is over it all. And God is not hostile to our work. The psalm speaks of how he saves and provides. Our livelihood depends upon God's beneficent governance of natural forces.

Virtues for Those in Business (Psalm 112)

Psalm 112 declares God's blessings on those who do business—dealing and lending, to use the psalm's terms—according to God's commandments. “Wealth and riches are in their houses,” the psalm observes, and “they are not afraid of evil tidings” (Psalms 112:3, 7). The virtues that bring such blessings include graciousness, mercy, righteousness, generosity and justice (Ps. 112:4-5). Righteousness and justice may come as no surprise to us. People want to buy and sell from businesses that are upright and just, so these virtues can be expected, in general, to bring prosperity.

But what about graciousness, mercy, and generosity? Graciousness could mean informing a customer about a lower-cost solution that brings less profit to ourselves or our company. Mercy could mean giving a supplier another chance after they miss a delivery. Generosity could mean sharing specifications with others in the industry so they can make products that interoperate with ours—good for customers, but potentially creating competition for ourselves. Does Psalm 112 mean to say that such things lead to greater prosperity, not less? Apparently so. “They have distributed freely” the psalm says, yet they are firmer, more secure, steadier, and ultimately more successful than those who do not practice such virtues (Ps. 112:7-10). The psalm attributes this to the Lord (Ps 112:1, 7) but it doesn't say whether this is because he intervenes on their behalf or because he has created and maintained the world in such a way that these virtues tend to bring prosperity. Perhaps he does both.

Then again, perhaps the Lord blesses the upright by giving them a different picture of prosperity. Wealth and riches are included (Ps. 112:3, as above), but the overall picture includes much more than wealth. Thriving descendants (Ps. 112:2) who remember (Ps. 112:6) and honor them (Ps. 112:9), stable relationships (Ps. 112:6), heartfelt peace (Ps. 112:7), and an ability to face the future without fear (Ps. 112:8) are equally important in God's view of prosperity. Is it possible when we follow the Lord's commandments in business, it is not only our fortunes that are changed, but also our desires? If we could

come to want for ourselves what God wants for us, wouldn't we be guaranteed to find a happiness that endures forever?

Participating in God's work (Psalm 113)

Psalm 113 informs us “from the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the Lord is to be praised” (Ps. 113:2). Is it suggesting we should be in the temple (or in church) all day in order to praise the Lord? Or is it suggesting that in everything we do, including our daily work, we do it in praise to the Lord? From verses 7 through 9, we clearly see it is the latter. “He raises the poor from the dust, and lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes.” Although the psalm doesn't tell us how God accomplishes this, we know—as did the Psalmist—that it generally means through work. The opportunity for well-paying work brings the poor out of poverty, and generally God creates such opportunities through his people's work—those in business who create economic opportunity, those in government who ensure justice, those in education who instill the skills needed for good jobs. With its emphasis on lifting the poor and needy, Psalm 113 is calling for a whole life of practical praise to God.

Although the psalm could have named myriad kinds of work to illustrate its point, it selects only one—the work of bearing and rearing children “He gives the barren woman a home, making her the joyous mother of children” (Ps. 113:9). Perhaps this is because childlessness in ancient Israel virtually doomed a woman (and her husband) to poverty in old age. Or perhaps it is for some other reason. Regardless, it reminds of us of two important matters today. Most obviously, when mothers (and fathers) conceive, feed, clean, protect, play with, teach, coach, forgive, train, and love children, it takes work! Yet many mothers feel that no one—even the church—recognizes that what they do is as valuable as the work that others do because they get paid. Secondly, God's relief for adults who lack children and for children who lack adults usually comes about through the work of other people. Medical professionals may be able to restore fertility. Adoption professionals and child welfare workers bring would-be parents together with children who need parents, and remain with families to provide training and supervision as needed. All families depend on the support of a wide community of other people, including the people of God. For more on the work of families, see "The work of marriage, raising children, and caring for parents (Psalm 127, 128, 139)".

Producing True Value at Work (Psalms 127)

As Psalm 107 speaks of large-scale economic activity, so Psalms 127 and 128 speak of the household, the basic unit of economic production until the time of the Industrial Revolution. Psalm 127 begins with a reminder that all good work is grounded in God.

Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord guards the city, the guard keeps watch in vain. It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives sleep to his beloved. (Psalm 127:1–2)

Both the “house” and the “city” refer to the same thing, the goal of providing goods and security for the residents. Ultimately, all economic activity is aimed at enabling households to thrive. The passage obviously asserts that diligent labor alone is not enough (compare Proverbs 26:13–16, on laziness). Beyond the obvious point, there is a deeper meaning. Hard work can produce a large and beautiful

house, but it cannot create a happy home. A zealous entrepreneur can create a successful business but cannot by work alone create a good life. Only God can make it all worthwhile.

In most economies today, work other than farming is not usually performed in households, but in larger organizations. But the message of Psalm 127 applies to today's institutionalized workplaces much as it does to ancient households. To thrive, every place of work must produce something of value. Putting in hours is not enough—the work has to result in goods or services that others need.

Believers may be able to offer something of special significance in this regard. In every workplace there is a temptation to produce items that can turn a quick buck, but don't offer any lasting value. Businesses can increase profits—in the short term—by cutting the quality of materials. Sales people may be able to take advantage of buyers' unfamiliarity to sell dubious products and accessories. Educational institutions can offer classes that attract students without developing lasting capabilities. And so on. The more we understand the genuine needs of the people who use our goods and services, and the more we contribute to the true value of what we produce, the more we can help our work institutions resist these temptations. Because true worth is ultimately grounded in God, we may have a unique ability to serve this role. But it must be done with humility and constant listening. It will accomplish nothing to loudly throw around our half-baked opinions until people are sick of hearing from us.

The Work of Marriage, Raising Children, and Caring for Parents (Psalm 127, 128, 139)

The work of marriage, childbearing and caring for parents comes to the fore again in Psalms 127, 128 and 139. (The work of childbearing is an important element of Psalm 113, "Participating in God's Work (Psalms 113)".) "Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table" (Psalm 128:3). Husbands and wives together engage in production of the most fundamental kind—re-production! Needless to say, the wife performs more labor in this endeavor than the husband. In the Bible this is not a despised role—it is understood to be essential for survival and was honored in ancient Israel. Beyond the bearing of children, wives typically managed the household, including both domestic and commercial production (Proverbs 31:10–31).

The Bible honors those who go down to the sea and those who shepherd the sheep (traditional male occupations) as well as those who manage the household (a traditional female occupation). Today, work roles are much less divided according to sex—except for managing the family home, which still is performed mostly by women^[4]—but the honor accorded to marriage and to the work of families still applies.

Like every form of work—and bearing children is work! —child-bearing comes from God. "It was you [God] who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb" (Ps. 139:13). Likewise, as with every other form of labor, this does not mean that when tragedy strikes it is a punishment from or abandonment by God. Rather, child-bearing is a point of God's common grace to humanity throughout the world. In the womb God makes us, and he makes us for a purpose. Our birthright is to do work of value to God himself.

We return to Psalm 127 for the final element of this theme, that the work of a household includes caring for those whose age diminishes their work capacity. “Sons are indeed a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward” (Psalm 127:3). In the ancient world, people had no institutionalized pension plans or health insurance. As they became older, their sons provided for them. (The text speaks of “sons” because typically daughters would marry and enter the households of their husbands’ families.) In effect, sons were a couple’s retirement plan, and this bound the generations closely together.

It may seem stark to put the value of raising children in economic terms. Today, we might feel more comfortable speaking of the emotional rewards of raising children. Be that as it may, this verse teaches that adults need children as much as children need adults, and that children are a gift from God, not a burden. It also reminds us of all the investments our parents made in us—emotional, physical, intellectual, creative, economic, and many more. As we grow up and our parents come to depend on us, it is right for us to take on the work of caring for parents. There are a variety of ways this may be done. The point is simply God’s command to honor our parents (Exodus 20:12) is not only a matter of attitude, but also of work and economic care.

The Right Use of Power (Psalm 136)

Power is essential to most work, and it must be exercised rightly. Psalm 136 lays out the proper use of power by showing four examples of how God uses power.

The first example comes in verses 4-9. It shows God’s use of power to create the world, “who by his understanding made the heavens...who spread out the earth upon the waters” (Ps. 136:5-6). This takes us back to Genesis 1—to the God of creation, giving our world all that we need to flourish. But note the order in which God works, first creating systems (land, water, night, day, sun and moon) that were necessary for the survival of his later creations (plants, land animals, swimming and flying creatures). God did not create animals until there was dry land and vegetation to sustain them. When it is in our power to create tasks or systems, we use power properly when we create environments in which we and those around us not only survive but thrive. For more on God’s provision in creation, see “Provision (Genesis 1:29-30; 2:8-14)” in *Genesis 1-11 and Work* at www.theologyofwork.org.

The second example comes in Psalm 136:10-15 when God delivers his people from slavery in Egypt. The third comes immediately afterwards, when God strikes down the Canaanite kings who oppose Israel in its journey to settle the Promised Land (Ps. 136:16-22). Together these show us that God uses power to free people from oppression and to oppose those who would keep others from the good God intends for them. When our work frees others to fulfill their destiny in God’s design, we are using power rightly. When our work would re-enslave workers or oppose God’s work in and through them, we are abusing power.

The fourth example comes at the end of the psalm. “It is God who remembered us in our low estate...and rescued us from our foes...who gives food to all flesh” (Ps. 136:23-25). God lovingly recognizes our weakness and supplies our needs. When we use power to do work that benefits others, we are using power as God would use it.

Finally, for the proper use of power, every verse of Psalm 136 reminds us to give thanks to God, “whose steadfast love endures forever.”

Psalm 119

Containing 176 verses, Psalm 119 is the longest single chapter in the Bible. The author of Psalm 119 is unknown, but most scholars agree that it was written by David, Ezra, or Daniel. Each of these proposed authors suffered serious difficulties in his life, and the author of Psalm 119 reflects that in descriptions of plots, slanders, and taunts against him (verses 23, 42, 51, 150), persecutions (verses 61, 86, 95, 110, 121, 134, 157, 161), and afflictions (verses 67, 71, 143, 153). The persecution and affliction of the man (and woman) of God is a major theme of Psalm 119.

Another prominent theme in Psalm 119 is the profound truth that the Word of God is all-sufficient. Psalm 119 is an expansion of Psalm 19:7–9: “The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous.” There are eight different terms referring to the Word of God throughout the psalm: *law, testimonies, precepts, statutes, commandments, judgments, word, and ordinances*. In almost every verse, the Word of God is mentioned. Psalm 119 affirms not only the character of the Scriptures, but it affirms that God’s Word reflects the very character of God Himself. Notice these attributes of God ascribed to Scripture in Psalm 119:

1. Righteousness (verses 7, 62, 75, 106, 123, 138, 144, 160, 164, 172)
2. Trustworthiness (verse 42)
3. Truthfulness (verses 43, 142, 151, 160)
4. Faithfulness (verse 86)
5. Unchangeableness (verse 89)
6. Eternality (verses 90,152)
7. Light (verse 105)
8. Purity (verse 140)

The format of Psalm 119 is an alphabetic acrostic, meaning that the first letters of each line in Hebrew follow through the alphabet, 8 lines per letter, thus 8 lines x 22 letters in Hebrew = 176 lines. One message of this psalm is that we are to live a lifestyle that demonstrates obedience to the Lord, who is a God of order (hence the acrostic structure), not of chaos.

The psalm opens with two beatitudes. “Blessed” are those whose ways are blameless, who live according to God’s law, who keep His statutes and seek Him with all their heart. The author of the psalm is a man who has known great trouble in his life, but also one who has come through it with a deep and passionate understanding of God’s unfailing love and compassion (Psalm 119:75–77). Throughout his affliction, the author clings to the truths he learns from the Scriptures, which are eternal and “stand firm in the heavens” (Psalm 119:89–91). His love for the Word of God and his dedication to

remember it and live by it is a theme that is repeated over and over (verses 11, 15–16, 24, 34, 44, 47, 55, 60, etc.)

These are the lessons for us in this great psalm. The Word of God is sufficient to make us wise, train us in righteousness, and equip us for every good work (2 Timothy 3:15–17). The Scriptures are a reflection of God's nature, and from them we learn that we can trust His character and His plan and purposes for mankind, even when those plans include affliction and persecution. Blessed indeed are we if our delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law we meditate day and night (Psalm 1:2).

The Story of Psalm 119

Solomon was king of Israel nearly 1000 years **Before Christ** came to the earth (B.C.). Solomon built the house of God that was in Jerusalem. We call it "the *temple". About 600 B.C. a nation called Babylon fought the *Jews. A nation is a country with a government. Babylon was 800 kilometres east of Jerusalem. The Babylonians won the fight and they took many *Jews to Babylon. We call this "the *exile". The Babylonians also destroyed the *temple.

After the *exile many *Jews went back to their own country. About 500 B.C. they built the *temple again. Then they made the Book of Psalms to sing in the new *temple. Some were old psalms by David, Moses and Isaiah. Other psalms were new like Psalm 1. Psalm 119 was probably one of these new psalms. It is a very special psalm. There are 176 verses (or parts) in it. Some people think that 176 different people wrote one verse each. Other people think that Ezra wrote all Psalm 119. Ezra was a *Jewish leader about 450 B.C.

There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet. The *Jews spoke Hebrew, so they wrote Psalm 119 in the Hebrew language. The first letter of the Hebrew alphabet is aleph. Verses 1-8 all begin with aleph. Beth is the second letter. Verses 9-16 all begin with beth. Verses 17-24 all begin with the 3rd letter and so on. So, there are 22 times 8, or 176 verses in the psalm. We think that they did this to make it easier for them to remember the psalm. It was probably a psalm that *Jewish leaders had to remember. We have not made the verses start with the right letter in this translation. We have put the psalm into 22 groups with 8 verses in each group.

There are also 8 special words in the psalm. To the *Jews these 8 words were important. They described what God told them to do. They are also important for Christians, because they tell them the ways that God speaks to them. The most important way is through the Bible. Christians call the Bible 'The Word of God'. Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible. You will probably find that you can study it more easily in groups of 8 verses.

Here are the 8 special words:

- 1. word** (dabar in Hebrew): it means things like the 10 commandments in Exodus chapter 20. These were the 10 things that God told his people to do or not to do.
- 2. saying** (imrah): this is another way to say word.
- 3. statutes** (chuqqim): these are the rules that the *Jews made early in their history. We translate it *laws in Psalm 119. "History" means the story of what happened.
- 4. judgments** (mishpatim): a later word for statutes. We translate it "rules" in Psalm 119.
- 5. law** (torah): this means the first 5 books of the Bible. Later it included other books like Isaiah and Jeremiah. We translate it "*teaching" in Psalm 119.

6. ***commands** (mitsvat): what someone with authority tells you to do.

7. **precepts** (piqudim): these give us help when we want to know what to do. We translate it "***guidelines**" in Psalm 119.

8. **testimonies** (eduth): these are the things that God tells us to do as ***Jews** or **Christians**. We translate it "***instructions**" in Psalm 119.

There are other important words in Psalm 119. They include way and path; ***heart** and follow.

Way and path both mean the same thing in the psalm. They mean: what we do in our lives. Our way can be good or bad. If we obey Psalm 119, our way will be good. Jesus said, "I am the way" (John 14:6). If we obey Jesus, our way will be good. In Acts 9:2, "in the way" is another name for "being a Christian".

***heart** does not mean the same thing each time it comes:

- "**a clean *heart**" means that God has forgiven us
- "**in my *heart**" means "in my mind"
- "**all my / their *heart**" means "all that I/they can do in the body or mind"

Your ***heart** in the psalms often means all of you! When God ***forgives** us, he gives our ***sin** to Jesus. He takes it away. Our ***sin** is the bad things that we do.

Follow in verses 4, 14, 15, 56, 63, 87, 100, 133, 168 and 173 means "obey".

Psalm 119

ALEPH

- v1 The people that make no mistakes in the way are very happy.
They obey the ***teaching** of the ***LORD**.
- v2 The people that keep to his ***instructions** are very happy.
They look for him with all their ***heart**.
- v3 Also, they do nothing that is wrong.
They walk in his ways.
- v4 You have made ***guidelines** for me.
I must follow them all.
- v5 I want to make sure
that my ways obey your ***laws**.
- v6 Then I will not be ashamed
when I remember all your ***commands**.
- v7 I will ***praise** you with a clean ***heart**
when I learn your ***righteous rules**.
- v8 I will obey your ***laws**.
Do not ever stop giving me help.

BETH

- v9 How can a young man keep his path clean?
He must obey your words.
- v10 I have looked for you with all my ***heart**.

Do not let me forget your *commands.

- v11 I have hidden your *sayings in my *heart
so that I do not *sin against you.
- v12 *LORD, you are *blessed!
Teach me your *laws.
- v13 My lips repeat all the *commands of your mouth.
- v14 I am happier following the way by your *instructions
than having a lot of money.
- v15 I want to think about your *guidelines
and follow your paths.
- v16 I am very happy with your *laws.
I will not forget your word.

GIMEL

- v17 Be kind to your servant.
Then I will live and obey your word.
- v18 Open my eyes
and I will see *wonderful things in your *teaching.
- v19 I am a stranger in the earth.
Do not hide your *commands from me.
- v20 I love to obey your rules so much
that I have no interest in other things.
- v21 You are angry with the people who think that they are important.
Bad things will happen to them
when they walk away from your *commands.
- v22 Some people say bad and *unkind things about me
because I keep to your *instructions.
Take me away from those people.
- v23 *Princes sit down and make plans against me.
But your servant thinks only about your *laws.
- v24 Yes! Your *instructions make me really happy.
They are like people that tell me what to do.

DALETH

- v25 I am lying on the ground.
Give me the life that your word promises to me.
- v26 I told you about my ways and you answered me.
Teach me your *laws.
- v27 Make me to understand what your *guidelines mean.
Then I will always think about the *wonderful things that you do.
- v28 My very great *sadness has made me tired.
Make me strong again as your word promises.
- v29 Take the false way from me.

Be kind to me in your *teaching.

v30 I have chosen the right way.
I will not forget your rules.

v31 I will keep to your *instructions, *LORD.
Do not make me ashamed.

v32 I will run in the way of your *commands
because you give help to my *heart.

HE

v33 *LORD, give me help to understand your *laws,
then I will always obey them.

v34 Explain your *teaching to me, then I will always obey it.
I will do it with all my *heart.

v35 Make me to walk in the path where your *orders send me.
Do that because it will give me much pleasure.

v36 Turn my *heart to your *instructions
and not to wanting *riches.

v37 Turn my eyes away from looking at things that have no value.
Give me the life that is in your word.

v38 Do for your servant the things that your *sayings promise.
This will make him be afraid of you.

v39 I am afraid of being ashamed.
Do not let it happen, because your rules are good.

v40 I really want your *guidelines.
Keep me alive as you are *righteous.

VAV

v41 *LORD, I want your kind love to come to me
and I want your *sayings to make me safe.

v42 Then I will have something to say to the people that laugh at me.
They laugh at me because I *trust in your word.

v43 Do not take a true word away from my mouth,
because I put my hope in your rules.

v44 I will always obey your *teaching,
I will never stop.

v45 I will be free to walk anywhere
because I look for your *guidelines.

v46 I will talk about your *instructions before kings.
I will not be ashamed.

v47 I love your *commands
and I am very happy with them.

v48 I lift up my hands to your *commands, which I love.
I am always thinking about your *laws.

ZAYIN

- v49 Remember your word to your servant.
You made me put my hope in it.
- v50 Your *sayings *comfort me when I am sad.
They comfort me because they give me life.
- v51 *Proud people laugh at me all the time,
but I do not turn away from your *teaching.
- v52 *LORD, I remember the rules that you made long ago.
They make me feel better.
- v53 I get very angry
when *godless people turn away from your *teaching.
- v54 Your *laws are my songs
in the house where I live.
- v55 *LORD, in the night I will remember your name.
I will keep your *teaching.
- v56 I do this
because I follow your *guidelines.

HETH

- v57 *LORD, you are everything to me.
I promise to obey your words.
- v58 I ask you, with all my *heart,
to *have *mercy on me as you have promised.
- v59 I have thought about my ways,
and my feet are going back to follow your *instructions.
- v60 I will hurry to obey your *commands
and I will not be slow.
- v61 People who do not know God are all round me.
They tie me up but still I do not forget your *teaching.
- v62 I get up in the middle of the night to *praise you
because your rules are *righteous.
- v63 I am a friend of everyone that is afraid of you.
And I am a friend of those who follow your *guidelines.
- v64 *LORD, the earth is full of your kind love.
Teach me your *laws.

TETH

- v65 You do good things for your servant, *LORD,
as your word says.
- v66 Teach me. Then I will choose and know what is right.
I will do that because I *trust your *commands.
- v67 Before I was in trouble with you I made mistakes.
But now I keep to your *sayings.

v68 You are good and you do good things.
Teach me your *laws.

v69 *Proud men have told me lots of lies,
but your *guidelines are of great value to me.

v70 #Their *heart is fat and they are *stupid;
but I love your *teaching.

v71 My trouble was good for me.
It made me learn your *laws.

v72 *Teaching from your mouth is better for me
than a lot of *silver and gold.

#This is the *heart of the *proud men in verse 69. It means that they cannot think clearly.

JODH

v73 Your hands*created me. And they made me what I am.
Help me to understand and learn your *commands.

v74 The people that are afraid of you will be happy.
They will be happy when they see me.
This is because I am *trusting in your word.

v75 *LORD, I know that your rules are *righteous.
You were right when you sent me trouble.

v76 Now your kind love makes me feel better.
You promised this to your servant in your *sayings.

v77 Send your love to me and I will live!
Your *teaching makes me really happy.

v78 *Proud men will be ashamed
because they say lies about me without any reason.

v79 The people that are afraid of you will turn to me again.
They understand your *instructions.

v80 My *heart will make no mistakes about your *laws.
I will not be ashamed.

KAPH

v81 I feel weak while I wait for you to save me.
My hope is in your word.

v82 My eyes are closing while I look for your *sayings.
I say, "When will you *comfort me?"

v83 I am like #a *wineskin in smoke
but I will not forget your *guidelines.

v84 The life of your servant is not very long.
When will you make the people that *persecute me obey your rules?

v85 *Proud people have made *traps for me.
Your *teaching says that they must not do this.

v86 All your *commands are true.

But people still *persecute me with lies. Give me help!

v87 People on earth almost destroyed me,
but I did not stop following your *guidelines.

v88 Your kind love gives me life.
I will obey your *instructions.

We are not sure what this means.

LAMED

v89 *LORD, your word will always rule in the *heavens.

v90 Your *truth will continue from one century to the next.
You have fixed the earth and it will remain.

v91 #They remain today as your rules say they must.
They are all your servants.

v92 If your *teaching had not made me happy
then my great *sadness would have destroyed me.

v93 I will never forget your *guidelines
because in them you give me life.

v94 I am yours, save me!
Do it because I have looked for your *guidelines.

v95 The *godless wait to destroy me,
but I am studying your *instructions.

v96 I see that all that is good on earth will finish.
But your *commands have no end.

#"they" probably means the earth and the stars in the *heavens (skies).

MEM

v97 I love your *teaching very much.
I think about it all day long.

v98 Your *commands teach me more than my enemies.
Your *commands are always with me.

v99 I understand more than all my teachers
because I think about your *commands.

v100 I understand more than the old people
because I follow your *guidelines.

v101 I do not let my feet walk in any *evil path
because I obey your word.

v102 I do not turn away from your rules,
because you teach me.

v103 Your *sayings are like *honey to me.
They are like something that tastes good.

v104 Your *guidelines give me help to understand things,
so I hate every wrong path.

NUN

- v105 Your word is a *lamp to my foot
and a light to my path.
- v106 I have really promised to keep your *righteous rules
and I will do it.
- v107 People have hurt me very much.
Give me the life that your word promises.
- v108 *LORD, I pray that you will be happy with what I say.
And I pray that you will teach me your rules.
- v109 I am always in danger,
but I never forget your *teaching.
- v110 *Wicked people have made a *trap for me,
but I do not go away from your *guidelines.
- v111 Your *instructions will always be with me
and they make my *heart very happy.
- v112 I will make my *heart obey your *instructions always, to the end.

SAMEKH

- v113 I hate the people that do not believe you.
But I love your *teaching.
- v114 You are my secret place where I can hide.
I put my hope in your word.
- v115 Go away from me, you bad people!
I will obey my God's *commands.
- v116 Give me help and life, as your word promises.
And do not make me ashamed, because I hope in you.
- v117 Give me help and I will be safe.
I will always obey your *laws.
- v118 You turn away from people that do not follow your *laws.
This is because they speak lies.
And they are not honest.
- v119 You destroy all the bad people in the world as *rubbish.
For this reason I love your *instructions.
- v120 Am afraid of you and it makes my body *shiver.
I am afraid of your rules.

AYIN

- v121 I was *righteous and I obeyed the rules.
Do not give me to my *oppressors.
- v122 Make sure that good things happen to your servant.
Do not let *proud people become my *oppressors.
- v123 My eyes have stopped seeing that you are saving me.
They do not see your *righteous *sayings.

- v124 Do with your servant what your kind love suggests.
Teach me your *laws.
- v125 I am your servant. Explain your *instructions to me
so that I understand them.
- v126 It is time for the *LORD to do something.
People have not obeyed your *teaching.
- v127-128 I hate every wrong path because:
- I love your *commands more than gold, *pure gold
 - I think that all your *guidelines are right

PE

- v129 I obey your *instructions
because they are *wonderful.
- v130 When I read your words they bring light.
They help people that do not know enough to understand things.
- v131 My mouth is wide open as I *breathe.
This is because I am so *eager for your *commands.
- v132 Turn to me and have *mercy on me.
Your rules say that you will do this.
You will do this to people that love your name.
- v133 Make my feet follow your *sayings.
Do not let *sin rule over me.
- v134 Make me free from *oppressors
and I will follow your *guidelines.
- v135 Show a kind face to your servant
and teach me your *laws.
- v136 Streams of water come from my eyes
because people do not obey your *teaching.

TSADHE

- v137 *LORD, you are *righteous
and your rules are good.
- v138 The *instructions that you gave are very fair.
And we can *trust in them.
- v139 I am so *eager that it makes me feel weak.
But my enemies do not listen to your words.
- v140 We have found that your *sayings are true.
Your servant loves them.
- v141 I am not important and people do not like me.
But I will not forget your *guidelines.
- v142 You are always *righteous and fair.
Your *teachings are true.
- v143 An enemy brought me trouble,

but your *commands make me happy.

v144 Your *instructions are always fair.
Make me understand them and find life.

KOPH

v145 I cried with all my *heart. "Answer me, *LORD".
"I will obey your *laws", I cried.

v146 "Save me
and I will keep to your *instructions."

v147 I woke up before dawn and cried to you for help.
I want all that you promised in your word.

v148 I stayed up all night
and thought about your *sayings.

v149 Listen to my voice, because you are loving and kind.
*LORD, keep me alive as your rules promise me.

v150 The people that *persecute me are coming near.
They want to do something very bad to me.
They are far away from your *teaching.

v151 *LORD, you are near to me.
All your *commands are true.

v152 I have known about your *instructions for a long time.
And I have known that you made them to continue always.

RESH

v153 Look at my trouble!
Save me because I do not forget your *teaching.

v154 Fight my fight for me and *redeem me.
Keep me alive as your *sayings promise me.

v155 *Godless people are far away from being safe.
They do not look for your *laws.

v156 *LORD, your love is great,
because your rules keep me alive.

v157 Many enemies *persecute me
but I do not go away from your *instructions.

v158 I see people doing such bad things that I hate them.
But, I do not stop obeying your *sayings.

v159 See how I love your *guidelines, *LORD.
Keep me alive through your kind love.

v160 All your words are true.
All your *righteous rules will continue always.

SHIN

v161 *Princes *persecute me for no good reason.
But it is your word that really makes my *heart afraid.

- v162 I am very happy with your *sayings.
I am like someone that finds great riches.
- v163 I do not like *lies, I hate them.
Your *teaching is what I love.
- v164 I *praise you 7 times every day
because of your *righteous rules.
- v165 People that love your *teaching have a lot of *peace.
Nothing will make them fall down.
- v166 *LORD, I am waiting for you to save me
while I obey your *commands.
- v167 I will keep to your *instructions
because I love them so much.
- v168 I follow your *guidelines and *instructions
because you see all that I do.

TAV

- v169 I am calling to you for help, *LORD.
I want to understand your word.
- v170 Hear what I pray and have *mercy on me.
Save me, as your *sayings promise me.
- v171 My lips will pour out *praise
because you are *teaching me your *laws.
- v172 My *tongue will sing your *sayings
because all your *commands are *righteous.
- v173 I want your hand to come to my help
because I chose to follow your *guidelines.
- v174 *LORD, I want you to save me.
Your *teaching makes me very happy.
- v175 Give me life so that I can *praise you.
May your rules give me help.
- v176 I have become like a lost sheep.
Look for your servant,
because I have not forgotten your *commands.

Something to do

1. Find which 8 verse groups have all 8 special words in them. (See **The Story of Psalm 119.**)
2. Learn to say some of the verses without looking at the words. Try verses 11, 33, 97, 105 and any other verses that you like.
3. Find the verses that talk about
 - (a) being very happy;
 - (b) what the *psalmist did in the night;
 - (c) *comfort;
 - (d) people that *persecute me.

4. Find all the verses with "*heart" in them and decide what each means. Look in **The Story of Psalm 119** for help.

Word List

blessed ~ someone that God has said or done good things to.

breathe ~ air going through our mouths.

comfort me ~ make me strong and/or happier; say kind things to me and give me help.

command ~ tell someone to do something.

covenant ~ two people have agreed what each should do (here, God and his people). Look in Psalm 120 about the covenant.

create ~ make.

eager ~ want very much for something to happen; wanting to do something very much.

evil ~ very, very bad.

exile ~ away from your own country.

forgive ~ take away the results of *sin. (But look in the notes on Psalm 85:2.)

godless ~ people that do not obey God, and that fight against him.

grapes ~ the fruit of a plant called the vine. People use them to make drink that has alcohol in it. The drink is wine.

guidelines ~ See The Story of Psalm 119.

have mercy on ~ be kind and *forgive when you do not have to.

heart ~ part of the body. *Jews believed that you thought in your heart.

heavens ~ the skies (with sun, moon and stars) or the home of God.

honey ~ a special sugar made by insects called bees.

instructions ~ See The Story of Psalm 119.

Jew ~ a person who is born from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their children.

Jewish ~ a word that describes a *Jew or anything to do with a *Jew.

lamp ~ light that you can carry with you.

laws ~ the rules in a country. In Psalm 78 the rules in the first 5 books of the Bible.

lie ~ say words that are not true.

LORD ~ the *covenant name for God (in a *covenant you agree with someone).

mercy ~ being kind when you do not have to be kind.

oppressors ~ people that hurt me. They can hurt me because they are stronger than me.

order ~ these words tell someone what they must do.

peace ~ when there is no fighting with God or with people; when there is no war and everybody is happy.

persecute me ~ do bad things to me because of what I believe.

praise ~ to say how great someone is; or, words that say how great someone is.

prince ~ son of a king.

proud people ~ proud people think that they are good and clever. But they may not be.

psalmist ~ the person that wrote a psalm (or psalms).

pure ~ very, very clean.

redeem ~ buy back from the enemy.

riches ~ a lot of money and other things of value.

righteous ~ very good (only God is really righteous). God says that the people who love and obey him are righteous. Sometimes we say they are "the righteous", meaning "righteous people". Look after Psalm 5 in Book 1 of the Psalms of David for more about the word "righteous".

rubbish ~ what people throw away.

sadness ~ to feel very sad.

sayings ~ words that God has said.

shiver ~ feel very, very cold.

silver ~ a metal of great value, like gold.

sin ~ not obeying God; or what you do when you do not obey God.

stupid ~ opposite of clever.

teaching ~ (in Psalm 119) part of the first 5 books of the bible.

temple ~ a place where people meet to worship God.

tongue ~ the part of our mouth that we talk with.

trap ~ thing that you catch animals or birds in.

trust ~ believe that someone (usually God in the psalms) will be kind to you.

truth ~ words that are true.

unkind ~ the opposite of kind.

wicked ~ very, very bad.

wine ~ a drink with alcohol in it. People make it from *grapes.

wineskin ~ a wineskin is like a bottle. People made them from animal skins. People store *wine in wineskins.

wonderful ~ great and surprising.

Psalm 119

Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the bible at 176 verses. “The Psalm is arranged in an acrostic pattern. There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet, and this Psalm contains 22 units of 8 verses each. Each of the 22 sections is given to a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and each line in that section begins with that letter. . . The sections and verses are not like a chain, where one link is connected to the other, but like a string of pearls where each pearl has equal, but independent value.”

Questions

1. From Psalm 119:1-16, how important would you say scripture is to the psalmist?

2. What do 119:4-8, say about how important scripture is to God? (See also Deuteronomy 11:18-21; Matthew 5:18)

3. Where did Paul and Peter say scripture comes from? 2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Peter 1:20-21

4. How did the Psalmist describe scripture in the following verses.
 - 119:54

 - 119:105

5. In response to the question in Psalm 119:9a (“How can a young man keep his way pure?”), what answers does he give in vv. 9b-16?

6. From Psalms 119: 97-100, list the phrases that describe the benefits that scripture gives.
 - 119:98

 - 119:99

- 119:100

- 119:104 (Note what God's testimonies/statutes are called in 119:24) 16.

7. From 119:97-102, list the phrases that describe the kind of involvement with the Word it took for him to gain this understanding.

- What conclusion did the psalmist come to about departing from God's word? 119:104b

8. Who does the psalmist name in the following and how do they regard the law?

- v. 85

- v. 136

- v. 155 (See also Job 21:14-15)

- v. 158

9. What ultimate purpose did Christ give to the law? Matthew 5:17,18

10. In vv. 169-175, what final requests does the psalmist make? After all the words of devotion to God's law, what did the psalmist admit at the end? Psalm 119:176