

ANNOUNCE BUDGET DISCUSSION

Text: Psalm 119:9-16 (Pew Bible, pg.607)

Title: “Faith Sings ... With God’s Word”

Open your Bibles to Psalm 119. I’ve chosen just a few verses from Psalms 119 to focus for our youth. Read text Psalm 119:9-16.

ILLUSTRATION – We’re talking about Faith Songs.

Songs are an important part of any culture. They can be a powerful influence for good, and they can be a powerful influence for evil. A couple of weeks ago at the Grammy awards you had the recording artist Lady GaGa performing her new song “Born this Way.” Listen to just a few of the lyrics:

“I’m beautiful in my way,
'Cause God makes no mistakes
I’m on the right track, baby
I was born this way

No matter gay, straight or bi
lesbian, transgendered life
I’m on the right track, baby
I was born to survive
No matter black, white or beige
chola or orient made
I’m on the right track, baby
I was born to be brave
I’m beautiful in my way
'Cause God makes no mistakes
I’m on the right track, baby
I was born this way

So music can be a powerful influence for evil. But it is also a powerful influence for good.

ILLUSTRATION – Nan and I were at a Christian concert earlier this week and we heard a beautiful piece of music performed. Before the song was performed, the composer talked about the inspiration for the song. It came from a young student who was doing mission work in Haiti when the devastating earthquake struck there over a year ago. He was buried under the rubble of a collapsed building. Rescue workers dug feverishly to get him out, but the effort was complicated because they couldn’t see him. But they were guided to his location because he was singing, what the composer called, songs of peace. And following the sound of his singing the rescue workers located him. Unfortunately he died from the injuries, but his faith sang through the darkest moment of his life.

The Psalms are Faith Songs. Today ... “Faith Sings with God’s Word.” Every verse of Psalm 119 refers in some way to the Word of God.

Now remember that I said that the Psalms were composed as Hebrew poetry. This is evident from Psalm 119. There are 176 verses, the longest of the Psalms. Those 176 verses are arranged according to the 22 letter of the Hebrew alphabet. For example the first word of each of the first 8 verses begins with the Hebrew letter Aleph (equivalent to our “a”). And in the second section, vv.9-16, the first word of each of the verses begins with the Hebrew letter Beth (bet - equivalent to our “b”). And so it goes right through Psalm 119. Why did the writer compose it this way? It was a memory tool. This is an acrostic poem about the Word of God.

The first verse in our text (v.9) asks a great question:

Psalm 119:9 - How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word.

It’s a great question for young people. (The word “young” doesn’t just apply to a male. It’s a masculine noun, but it is used in the OT for young people in general. We’re talking here about the impressionable stage of a person’s life, and how to keep it pure and clean.

And the way that happens is by “living according to your word.” Now what is this “word”? I mentioned earlier that every verse in Psalm 119, including our text today, mentions the Word of God in some way, starting with ...

Psalm 119:1 - Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the LORD.

The word “law” (v.1) in Hebrew is “torah.” It is the word used to describe the Law of Moses or the Book of the Law as it is called. The law is the God’s gracious revelation of who He is, what He values, and how we are to live our lives in light of that.

The word for Law (“torah”) is not found in our text. But there are synonyms for the Law are found in each verse of our text:

- Word (v.9)
- Commands (v.10)
- Word (v.11) – a different Hebrew word from v.9
- Decrees (v.12) = God’s regulations
- Laws (v.13) = a different word from Torah; means His judgments
- Statutes (v.14) = God’s principles
- Precepts (v.15) = God’s directions
- Ways (v.15) = God’s Word is the path we are to take
- Decrees (v.16) = another word for regulation
- Word (v.16) = same as in v.9

These verses show us how we connect in a life-changing way to the Word of God. Now since Psalm 119 is an acrostic poem that was done for the sake of easy memory, let’s just use a similar approach to show us how the Word of God can have the impact upon our lives to keep our way pure. Let’s use the word PSALM to help us.

1. PURSUE God in His Word.

Psalm 119:10 - I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands.

“I seek you...” = I come before you to worship you

“with all my heart” = with all sincerity.

Each verse in our text is either a *praise* to God or *prayer* to God. This is God’s Word. It comes from His heart and from His mouth.

ILLUSTRATION – A couple of weeks ago Nan gave me a Valentines card. It had a great poem written on it. And then Nan wrote some very special personal words at the bottom. Now I couldn’t just read that card and think, “Wow! That’s a nice poem.” No, Nan was sharing her heart with me. And the same thing is true about your Bible.

Don’t tell me you have a hunger for God if you don’t spend any time in His Word.

We see it all the way through Psalm 119:

Psalm 119:72 - The law from your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold.

Psalm 119:81 - My soul faints with longing for your salvation, but I have put my hope in your word.

Psalm 119:164 - Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous laws.

The Bible has the maximum impact on our lives when we read it in pursuit of God.

2. STUDY the Word.

God’s Word will not have the impact on our lives that it should unless we study it.

Psalm 119:12 - Praise be to you, O LORD; teach me your decrees.

Psalm 119:16 - I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.

“neglect” = forget. In the OT, to forget something or someone was more than just not remembering it. It meant to turn away from something. So to forget God’s Word is to turn away from it. The opposite is true when we study it.

There’s a powerful prayer in v.18:

Psalm 119:18 - Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.

ILLUSTRATION – Now suppose you’re driving along University Drive and you see the zoo off in the distance. You can’t go home and tell someone that you went to the zoo today. You went *by* the zoo, but you didn’t go *to* it. Or suppose you pulled in the parking lot and then turned around and drove out. You can’t say you went to the zoo. Or suppose you went to a luncheon where you heard someone talk about the zoo. You can’t say I’ve been to the zoo. No, you drive in and park in the parking lot. You walk up and buy yourself a ticket. And you walk around to all the cages of the animals. And if you really want to experience the zoo, you not only look at the animals, you read about each one on the plaque outside of the cages or areas.

The same thing is true with studying God’s Word. You can’t really have the full effect of it just looking at the cover. You can’t really have the full effect of it just listening to someone else talk about it (though that is certainly important). You can’t have the full effect of it reading it like a novel, just to say that you’ve read it. No, to have the full effect, you need to study it ... book by book ... chapter by chapter ... verse by verse ... character by character ... doctrine by doctrine ... precept by precept.

I want to tell you that I’ve been studying the Bible for 35 years and I’m more excited about it now than ever before in my life. The deeper I go into it the more amazing God is to me.

Pursue God in His Word. Study the Word.

3. **ABSORB the Word in your heart.**

Now notice how the psalmist consumes the Word.

Psalm 119:11- I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

“I have hidden” = I have treasured your word in my heart. It’s not just something that stimulates me intellectually. It moves me spiritually and emotionally.

And the only way that can happen is to think deeply about the Word.

Psalm 119:15 - I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways.

Psalm 119:97 - Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.

Psalm 119:99 - I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes.

One of the greatest ways to meditate on the Word is to memorize it.

Absorb the Word of God in your heart. Take it the 18 inches from your head to your heart. The heart is the center of your being. Let it affect your mind, your will and your emotions. Let it move you. Let it change you. And that leads to the next way we are to encounter the Word of God.

4. **LIVE the Word**

Psalm 119:9 - How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word.

So here is a young person. The purity of their life is under constant pressure. How can they keep their life pure? Live according to God's Word.

Here's how it works. First, the Spirit of God takes the Word of God and works a miracle called regeneration. God uses His Word to save us. Jesus said to His disciples in John 15:3, "Now you are clean by the word I have spoken to you." And then throughout our lives as followers of Christ, the Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to transform us into the likeness of His Son.

Now how does that happen? Is it automatic? No, we take in the Word of God and the Holy Spirit brings those truths to mind as we encounter situations in our lives like temptation. The Holy Spirit brings those truths to our mind and our heart. Then we have to choose to obey. And as we obey we live the Word.

Psalm 119:11- I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

Psalm 119:105 - Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

So we need to pursue God in His Word, study His Word, absorb it in our hearts, live the Word, and finally...

5. MINISTER the word to others

It's not just for us. God gives us truths for us, and also so we can share those truths with other people. This is probably what the psalmist has in mind in v.13:

Psalm 119:13 - With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth.

We are to consistently and continuously share the truth of Scripture with one another. Ephesians 5:18 commands us to be filled with the Holy Spirit and right after that...

Ephesians 5:19 - Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs...

CONCLUSION

God has been so faithful to His promises in His Word. He can do nothing else but be faithful to His Word.

I think about the times I've been confused and I remember:

James 1:5 - If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

I think about the times I've been faced with a fearful situation and I remember:

Psalm 27:1 - The LORD is my light and my salvation— whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life— of whom shall I be afraid?

I think about the times I've faced temptation and I remembered:

1 Corinthians 10:13 - No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

I think about the times that I didn't think I could go on, and I remembered:

Isaiah 40:31 - but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

I think about the times I have when I've been enticed by the things of this world, and I remembered:

Psalm 13:5-6 - But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, for he has been good to me.

I think about the times I've been faced with difficult circumstances where I didn't know which way to turn, and I remembered:

Proverbs 3:5-6 - Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

I think about the times that God has brought me comfort in my troubles and I'm reminded of:

2 Corinthians 1:4 – (God) comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

I think about when I was lost in my sin and someone shared with me the truth of ...

Romans 10:13 - “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”