

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs

Choosing the Recipe

Pursuing the Treasures of Scripture

Selections from Psalm 119

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY



LET'S BEGIN HERE

All of us have had the same experience. We sat and listened as a gifted teacher or preacher opened the vault of Scripture, revealed some of its hidden treasures, and used those truths to give us insight and direction for living. Naturally, we wondered and we asked: “How is that person able to do that? . . . How can someone dig out such insightful treasures and then, on top of that, help us grasp their relevance?” Our amazement is intensified when those same Scriptures seemed so unclear and confusing to us. We have often wondered if it would be possible for us to do that for ourselves . . . or does it require a special gift or maybe advanced training at a Bible school or seminary or perhaps mastering a number of resourceful books on theology? None of the above! You will be pleased to know that by putting into practice several practical techniques—*really, only four*—you can get well underway in carrying out your desire of pursuing the treasures on your own. You can actually prepare your own spiritual meals!



Whetting Your Appetite: Getting Started

Tucked deep into the Old Testament book of Psalms is a familiar but, at first glance, daunting psalm. For generations, Psalm 119 has been considered a treasure trove of truth about God, the nature and power of His Word, and the profound importance of joining faith to the principles and promises of God. It's important, as with any passage of Scripture, to begin by focusing on what you see.



Read Psalm 119:1–12.

What words or phrases do you see repeated in the first twelve verses of this psalm?

Quotable

*You need to know
the joy of discovery
and the pleasure
of doing your own
digging so that you
become spiritually
and biblically
self-sustaining.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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Based on what you observe, what or who is the main focus of this psalm?

How many times does the psalmist make reference to the Lord? Write down a few examples.

The psalmist also emphasized the importance of the Word.

In these opening verses of Psalm 119, describe how the psalmist viewed the Word of God.

Write down the words the psalmist used to describe the Scriptures.

Using a Bible concordance (for a definition of this valuable Bible study resource, see “Some Helpful Tools” below) and look up the word *law*. Write down three or four references where that word is used. Look up those verses, and make some notes on the different ways *law* is used.



What emotions do you notice are expressed in these verses?

What emotions do you feel when thinking of the value of God's Word?

By observing the multiple use of the pronouns *You* and *Your* in reference to the Lord, we can determine that this psalm is primarily a prayer about the wonder and glory of His Law.



A CLOSER LOOK

Psalms Become the Language of the Heart

The book of Psalms in the Old Testament swells with examples of deep human emotion—from the triumphant declaration of godliness in Psalm 1, to the strident questions of a doubting king in Psalm 13, to the fortress-like confidence which flows from Psalm 46. Each reflects a real-time human experience and the language of a believer going with God in prayer. Image and metaphor become the language of appeal for the faithful—and in the psalms, we find a prayer language of our own as we wrestle with how to talk to God.

By becoming students of the Psalms, we can learn to pray and deepen our experience with the Lord. For instance, David cried out to the Lord in Psalm 42: “I hear the tumult of the raging seas / as your waves and surging tides sweep over me” (Psalm 42:7).

This is the language of a prayer of desperation—the words of one feeling as if life, like a mounting wave, threatens to overtake him.

Psalm 37 contrasts the fate of the wicked with the favor of those who put their trust in God. David, Israel's shepherd king, called on the Lord in prayer, rehearsing the promises of His goodness for “the one who delights in him” (37:23 NIV).

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Any believer struggling to find words to express the deepest loss or the highest praise needs only turn to the Psalms to find his or her voice and a holy script to bring to God in prayer.

Heart Essentials (Psalm 119:1–2, 11–12)

By observing the following key elements in the opening verses of Psalm 119, we discover certain conditions of the heart, or attitudes, essential for studying the Scriptures.

- *Personal integrity and purity*
Joyful are people of integrity,
who follow the instructions of the LORD. (Psalm 119:1)
- *A willingness to follow His commands*
Joyful are those who obey his laws
and search for him with all their hearts. (119:2)
- *A commitment of time for prayer and meditation*
I have hidden your word in my heart,
that I might not sin against you.
I praise you, O LORD;
teach me your decrees. (119:11–12)

Some Helpful Tools

Just as an archaeologist would never search for buried artifacts without the proper tools, we should never search the Scriptures without these helpful tools for study.

- A Bible. Make certain you have your own copy of the Scriptures in a translation you can understand.
- A Bible dictionary. This resource defines and provides in-depth information about key words and characters in the Bible.
- A concordance of the Bible. This is virtually an alphabetical listing of every major word in the Bible.
- A set of Bible maps. Most study Bibles today include a very reliable set of maps, typically as part of the end matter. You can also purchase a Bible atlas, which not only includes an extensive selection of maps but scholarly contextual information too.
- Students can also consult important tools online or use very helpful Bible-study software found at www.logos.com, www.biblegateway.com, www.soniclight.com, and many others.



Personal Promises

As you do the hard work of digging deep into the Scriptures, personal promises will emerge from your study. By the way, when you are searching the Scriptures, be on the lookout for promises God offers to you. So many passages in the Bible are full of these truths. Psalm 119 is no exception. You can gain . . .

- The promise of spiritual wisdom (Psalm 119:97–98)
- The promise of spiritual insight (119:99)
- The promise of spiritual understanding (119:33–40)

Ways We Absorb God's Truth

From our study of Psalm 119, we find five specific ways we absorb God's truth:

1. We absorb God's truth by *hearing* it (Romans 10:19).
2. We absorb God's truth by *reading* it (Psalm 119:18).
3. We absorb God's truth by *studying* it (2 Timothy 2:15).
4. We absorb God's truth by *memorizing* it (Psalm 119:13).
5. We absorb God's truth by *meditating* on it (Psalm 119:23).

Techniques That Reveal the Treasure

Now you're ready to dig into the truths of Scripture on your own. To begin to discover the riches of God's Word, you can use four simple techniques to help you in your study.

1. **Observation**—*What do I see?*
2. **Interpretation**—*What does it mean?*
3. **Correlation**—*How does it relate?*
4. **Application**—*What difference does it make?*



YOUR TURN IN THE KITCHEN

The *Searching the Scriptures* series is designed to help you not only gain a deeper and more substantive understanding of God's Word but perhaps more importantly to teach you how to dig deep into the Scriptures for yourself. Over time, you will develop a skill and a style that will serve you for a lifetime.

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Not unlike a skilled chef surveys the shelves of the kitchen for all the necessary and perfect ingredients for a delightful and nourishing meal, you can begin a process of learning to prepare spiritual meals for yourself. Ultimately, the goal will be for you to offer these truths to others in ways that are both palatable and enriching spiritually.

So before going any further, you need to put on your apron and ready yourself to try your hand at preparing a wonderful meal of biblical nourishment and encouragement. Are you ready to try your turn? Below are six practical exercises to get you started.

1. Take time to carefully read Psalm 119:1–40. Make a list of everything this psalm says about God’s Word. (Remember that God’s Word can also be referred to as commandments, laws, instructions, decrees, and regulations.) For example, “People who obey God’s Word are joyful” (verse 1), and “God has charged us to obey His commandments” (verse 4).
2. What kind of wisdom can a person get from studying God’s Word? Use Psalm 119:97–105 as your guide.
3. In any substantive Bible concordance, you will find multiple Bible verses that include the word *integrity*. If you have a concordance, find this word in your volume and scan the references it includes. Also, look up each of the following references in your Bible and note God’s calling for believers in each one:
 - Deuteronomy 9:5
 - 2 Samuel 22:26
 - 1 Kings 9:4
 - 2 Chronicles 19:7
 - Psalm 119:1
 - Proverbs 2:7, 21
 - Proverbs 10:9, 29
 - 1 Timothy 3:8



What do these verses teach you about the biblical call to a life of integrity?

4. As we learned in this message, it's helpful to look up words in the dictionary, especially in a Bible dictionary, to learn their meanings. Note the key word *sacrifice* in the following verse:

This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a *sacrifice* to take away our sins.

(1 John 4:10, emphasis added)

Turn to this verse in your own Bible and notice the word that is used. Some translations use “atonement” while others say “propitiation.” Look up the word used in your Bible in a Bible dictionary.

How is it defined?

Once you understand the meaning of this important word that illustrates what Jesus accomplished on the cross, describe *sacrifice* (or whatever word is used in your Bible) in your own words, using these passages to assist you.

Romans 3:25

Hebrews 2:17



1 John 2:2

5. A map can help you understand the context for the stories and events that take place in the Scriptures. Turn to the maps in the back of your Bible or to online maps. Locate one that traces the second journey of Paul. Follow that long journey with your finger, and as you do, take note of the places he traveled. You'll see that when he arrived at Troas in the western part of Asia Minor (the country known as Turkey today), he had to sail across the Aegean Sea to reach Europe. Once there, he went to Philippi and then on to Greece, where he continued to preach the gospel. Again, trace the remainder of his lengthy second journey with your finger. Pause and imagine how rugged his journey must have been as he traveled that distance in the first century.
6. Read and study Psalm 19:7–11. What promises are given to the believer who studies God's Word? (List at least five descriptions of God's Word from these verses.)



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, deepen my love for Your Word and give to me a greater desire to search the Scriptures on my own. Thank You for revealing Yourself in the pages of Your Word and in the person of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.





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When the book *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* was written, the format for this STS study was developed by Charles R. Swindoll and Rhome van Dyck and published at the end of chapter three under the title “Your Turn in the Kitchen.” For the 2016 broadcast, this STS study was expanded with additional material by Mark Tobey in collaboration with Charles R. Swindoll based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts.



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