

# Oh How I Love Your Law!

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*Psalm 119:97-104*

God has expressed Himself to us through the Bible and He consequently expects us to study it. But He wants more than an academic relationship with the Bible; He wants us to develop a joyful, loving, and respectful relationship with it. With those expectations in our minds, we will examine Psalm 119 to see what that relationship looked like the psalmist's life so that we can better understand what it should look like in our lives.

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## ***The psalmist's love for God's word***

- Psalm 119, the longest psalm, describes the author's love for God's word, which finds testimony in the psalm's careful construction - the psalm is a long acrostic divided into twenty-two, eight verse sections that work their way through the Hebrew alphabet.
- In picturing the author's love for God's word, the describing both the benefits it brought to his life and his responses to it.
  - The psalmist discussed the following benefits throughout the 176 verses of his psalm.
    - God's word provided him freedom even in the midst of persecutions.
      - The freedom the author found came through obedience to the God's law rather than from the requirements of the law (vv.45, 96).
      - That understanding of freedom motivated the author to ask God to free him from the persecutions he was experiencing so that he could more fully obey God's will (v. 134; cf. vv.81-88).
      - But the writer understood that following God's word offered another freedom; it offered freedom from sin (v.133).
    - The writer found freedom through the guidance he received from God's word.
      - God's word gave the author understanding (vv.34, 73, 125, 130, 144, 169).
      - But the Bible did not just give the psalmist understanding; it gave him access to God's superior teachings (vv.98-100).
      - The superior guidance that the writer received from God's word had an immediate, practical result - they allowed him to successfully navigate life (vv.24, 105).
    - The author also found that God's word revitalized him.
      - The psalmist understood that the answer to resisting the effects of life's problems could only be found in God's Law - it would revive him (vv.25, 50, 107, 144).
      - But the author understood that God linked promises of reviving to obedience to His word (vv.37, 88, 93-94).
      - He consequently focused his attentions on the God's word (v.23-24, 95, 165), which gave him comfort, especially during periods of affliction (vv.49-50).

- Because of the things he found in God's word, the author responded in the following ways to God's Word.
  - He delighted in God's commands (vv.14, 16, 111, 127, 162).
  - But even more than finding joy in God's word, he developed a deep love for it (vv.47-48, 97, 113, 119, 127, 132, 140, 159, 163, 165, 167).
  - The strength of his love for God's law can be seen in his great regret over his disobedience to the law (v.136).
  - We should take note that the writer felt real joy and deep love for God's word even though his obedience to it resulted in his persecutions (vv. 157-159).

### ***Our love for God's word***

- Psalm 119 goes to great lengths to impress upon its readers the deep love that its author had for God's word and thereby illustrates for us the kind of relationship that God wants us to have with our Bibles.
- That kind of relationship with our Bibles begins by understanding what our Bibles offer us - the Bible offers much more than simply all of the information we need to successfully navigate life (*II Timothy 3:16-17*); it more importantly allows us to intimately know God (*John 14:26; 16:12-15; I Corinthians 2:6-16; John 17:3*).
- The personal self-portrait of Himself that God included in the Bible explains His expectations for our relationship with it.
  - God expects us to intimately understand it through our personal studies (*II Timothy 2:15; Hebrews 5:11-14*).
  - God wants us to respect the Bible's teachings (*Matthew 5:17-19; Revelation 22:18-19*).
  - God also expects us to engage it with our hearts, loving it as we love Him (*II Timothy 1:13; John 14:15, 24; I John 5:3*).
- As with the author of the 119<sup>th</sup> psalm, properly appreciating our Bibles will have a profound effect on our lives.
  - It will result in a clear pattern of life-changing understandings and practices (*II Timothy 2:15; 1:13; I Corinthians 4:6*).
  - Like Paul, we will consider everything else in life second to having the opportunity to know Jesus and God through our Bible (*Philippians 3:7-8*).
- Given these expectations, we should ask ourselves questions like these:
  - "Does my life evidence a pattern of beliefs and practices that mirror the Bible's teachings?"
  - "Can I look back over my Christian life and see steady growth in my understanding of the Bible? Is that growth rate please faithful to God's expectations for study in passages like *II Timothy 2:15* and *Hebrews 5:1-14*?"
  - "How much time and money do I invest in studying my Bible? How does it compare to my other interests? What does that tell me about my interest in God's word?"

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Psalm 119 illustrates the power of God's word to bring truly amazing blessings like joy and peace into our lives...if we engage it in the way that God desires. Let's therefore follow the psalmist's example and seek to revolve our lives and our hearts around God's word.