



**I run in the path of your commands,  
for you have set my heart free.**

**Psalm 119:32**

**Passion · Priority · Performance**

**Sermons from  
Psalm 119**

# Praying Psalm 119

Devotionals & Meditations

*by Pastor Wes Johnson*

Based on the Bethel Baptist Church

UnCompromised Sermon Series

*July to December 2020*

*[www.betheleverett.org](http://www.betheleverett.org)*



The year 2020 brought unprecedented unrest into our world. From COVID-19 to racially and politically motivated riots, many began to ask, *where can we find peace of mind and rest for our souls in these troubled times?*

During the summer and fall of 2020, it was my privilege to preach the great 119<sup>th</sup> psalm to our Bethel Church family. All 176 verses of this magnificent psalm bring tribute to the power of God's inspired truth. When so much was giving way in our world, these inspired words of God invited us into a place of great stability.

Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible. It is organized into 22 stanzas which are structured around the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Each verse begins with the letter featured in that stanza. Each letter has a particular meaning to the ancient writers, and in many stanzas, we found that meaning woven into the eight verses. We came away with a fresh appreciation for the creative wisdom of the Biblical Author/author. We gained a fresh passion to learn, love and live out the truth found in these sacred pages.

It is our desire that you would find your life enriched as you use this devotional guide to ponder the marvelous truth of God. Take time to read the eight verses of each stanza. Then focus in on the meditations provided. May you find grace to live this marvelous truth!

Shalom,

Rev. Dr. Wes Johnson  
Everett, WA.



*The Aleph Stanza*  
*Passion - Priority - Performance*  
*Psalm 119:1-8*

*“Oh that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees!”*  
*Psalm 119:5*

Momentum in the spiritual life is fed by consistent engagement with God.

During my 11th grade year in Cross Country, my best friend and I decided that we would run every day, all through the season. No sitting around on the weekends. I was going to run on Saturdays and Sundays too. My endurance went up. I started competing at the top of the Junior Varsity races. Took 4th place overall in the Edmonds district JV championships.

I had high hopes for the next season. But the next year, I fell off the pace. My performance did not improve. Why? One factor was that I did not have the same work ethic as my Junior season.

The author of Psalm 119:5 is lamenting his inconsistency in obeying the Lord. And he’s also praying that he could develop **consistent habits of obedience** to the Lord!

To gain the rewards of a great life with God, we need consistent engagement with God and his Word.

That's what this series is all about.

Take time to repeat this phrase over in your mind until it becomes a prayer--***"Oh that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees!"*** Now pray it for someone else, ***"Oh, that \_\_\_\_\_'s ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees!"***

**Devo #2** What a great verse to start our meditations on Psalm 119. Written down by an ancient worshipper, it's a prayer expressing his longing for a more consistent life with God.

I hope this prayer has found its way into your heart this week. I hope that you have felt increased longing for a greater obedience to the Lord's revealed will.

I hope that you have felt that longing extend outward to others on your prayer list!

I'm glad we can express our longings to the Lord in this way. Now I would like to invite you to turn that prayer further outward to our troubled nation.

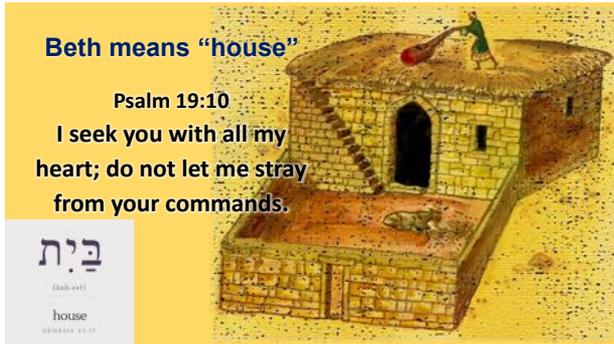
***"Oh, Lord, that the people of my country were steadfast in obeying you."***

What a transformation that would be.

- ◆ That those who are fighting COVID would be steadfast in obeying the Lord's decrees.
- ◆ That those who are longing for racial justice would be steadfast in obeying the Lord's decrees.
- ◆ That our local leaders, our police, fire and other first responders would be steadfast in obeying the Lord's decrees.

Will you pray it with me?

Shalom, Pastor Wes



## **The Beth Stanza** **Building Our Home with the Plans of the Lord** **Psalm 119:9-16**

**Beth:** The theme letter of this stanza is Beth, which means “house!” Here are some ways to build your spiritual house:

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

Jesus told us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind and all our strength. Psalm 119 tells us to seek God with all our heart.

That means we invest the energy of our emotion and our will toward connecting with the Lord. All our happiness—directed toward him. All our sorrow—directed toward him. All our thankfulness—directed toward him. You get the idea.

Seeking God with all our heart means that we move all our emotion his way. We decide to direct our emotion heavenward. Leaving our feelings earthbound leads us off track. Untended emotion creates energy that leads us away from the path of the Lord.

Today, take time to notice what you may be feeling.

- ◆ Are you feeling sorrow about a loss?
- ◆ Are you feeling anxious about the political situation in our country?
- ◆ Is all the news about COVID leaving you confused?

Direct those feelings toward the Lord. Connect with his feeling for you. His compassion. His mercy. His assurance. Feel the strength of his Presence

around you. Let your feelings relax in his Presence. Then move forward in his strength on the path that he has laid out in his Word.  
What a great way to build our house in the Lord!

### ***UnCompromised Devotional By Pastor Wes Johnson***

How do you make firm decisions that stick?

**Devo # 2** This week we are pondering Psalm 119:10, the key verse for the *bet or beyit* section of Psalm 119. ***I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands.***

The Hebrew word *beyit* means House, or Home. We all need to make firm decisions to review God's plans and build our spiritual house accordingly. When we seek God with all our heart, we engage our emotion, our desires, and our will. When our hearts are stirred by the Lord, we are ready to make decisions that last.

***But what can we do when we get started on a spiritual project but then lose heart? What then?***

Go back to the desire that motivated the change. Seek God through the energy of that desire.

Earlier this week we invited you to ponder your emotions and direct them toward the Lord. Your hopes. Your fears. Your loves. Your joys.

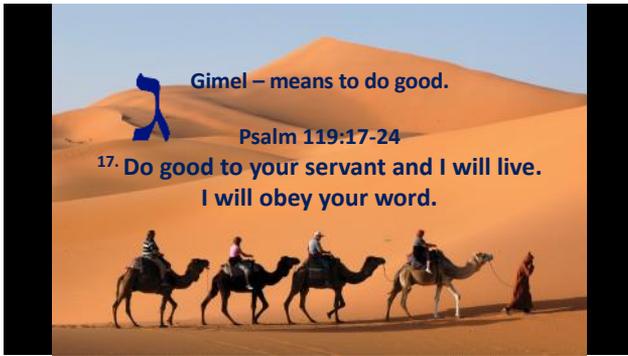
As we recognize the emotion we are feeling and immerse it in the awareness of God's Presence, our decisions gain power. We feel called into habits that build a great life.

For example, because we've been strengthened by the Presence of God's love, we chose faithfulness in our marriage, energy for our kids and grandkids, ability to take time with a neighbor in need.

Jesus stirs our emotion when he washes us clean from all sin, puts his Spirit into our hearts, and assures us of the gift of heaven. Such reality renews us each day. Christ invites us to deepen our habit of dependence upon him.

So seek God's will. Before you seek the opinion of man, research the Word of the Lord. Chose to follow Christ daily. Weekly. For a lifetime.

May your decisions build a solid life!



## The Gimel Stanza Traveling the Good Path Psalm 11-:17-24

### A Camel and the Goodness of God

***Do good to your servant and I will live; I will obey your word.  
Psalm 119:17***

Tapping into the extravagant goodness of the Lord can see us through the most difficult challenges of life.

This stanza of Psalm 119 is based upon the Hebrew letter *gimel*. The word *gimel* means to do good, or to provide a benefit. It was fun to learn that the same Hebrew letters, G-M-L, make up the word that means camel: *Gamal*. See it?

To an ancient traveler in the deserts of the Middle East, a camel is an extraordinary, life-saving benefit from the Lord!

In blistering hot weather, a camel can travel for eight to ten days on his last drink of water. Sure, he takes in up to 32 gallons at the filling station, but that water can carry him where no human can tread! We can die of thirst in the same conditions in just a couple of days!

And in the cool months of winter, the camel can survive for up to six months on the water that he gets just from chomping on palm fronds! Pretty handy pack animal, I would say. A vivid example of the goodness of God.

## **Tell me, what good gifts from the Lord sustain you each and every day?**

Take time to thank him!

Among the best gifts ever given by the Lord, like the camel, we can travel long and far as we drink deeply of the well of Christ. Jesus said,

*“Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. <sup>38</sup> Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.” <sup>39</sup> By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. (John 7:37-39)*

Drink deeply from the Lord each day. See how far he carries you!

**Pray:** *Be good to me, Lord. Carry me through the deserts of this life.*

### **Devo #2 Summer allergies or COVID19?**

**Do good to your servant and I will live, I will obey your word.  
(Psalm 119:17)**

What seems like a usual summer allergy flareup now needs to be evaluated for COVID!

Kathryn and I enjoyed a delightful walk in the woods beside the St. Lagumish River on Monday. But on Tuesday my sinuses took exception. Pressure. Drainage. Cough. Body ache. Headache followed. Pretty normal for me. But the next day, a fever! Not at all usual. Kathryn and I looked at each other in alarm.



I had an appointment with my knee surgery doc on Thursday, and knew that I would have to answer *yes* to several of the items on the COVID question list. And I would likely fail the temperature test. So I called and cancelled my post-surgical appointment, and scheduled instead at the COVID19 testing center.

On Wednesday I took my swabs. They said to look for results in 2 days.

I went home and waited. And thought about who I had been in contact with the last two weeks. Who I could have gotten it from? Who I could have given it to? I've been *fairly* diligent wearing the face-masks. But then a few conversations came to mind where I wasn't wearing the mask. Had I given it to my neighbor? Had I passed it on to my friend? Had I compromised their health? Had they compromised mine?

Then our sister-in-law called. She reported the same symptoms. Sinus flare. Cough. Body ache. Fever. She took the test. Negative. Her doc said, "We've seen a lot of summer allergies flaring recently. Looks a lot like COVID."

As she told us her story, I thought, "*It's so good of you Lord, to have our sis call and tell us this!*" I felt his peace. The next day I learned that my test was also negative.

***Do good to your servant, and I will live. I will obey your word.***

As I live for Jesus, I am reminded that *when I wear my mask, I am loving my neighbor.*

Shalom, Pastor Wes

# The Daleth Stanza The Doorway from Desolation to Delight Psalm 119:25-32

*When I run I feel his pleasure—*



Eric Liddell,  
Olympic gold medalist, 1924.

**I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free. (Psalm 119:32)**

What gets you moving when you are having a day of low energy?

Or a lifetime of low energy?

Our energy can be depleted by so much. Unresolved tensions. Too many burdens piling up for too long. An offense we have suffered. An offense we have given and left unresolved.

Wouldn't it be great to off-load those burdens and regain our strength? That is what is happening with the author of Psalm 119. In verse 25, he describes a time when he was laid low in the dust. A time when he was wondering if he was even going to make it. But now he is up and running hard with his heart wide open! How did that happen?

He passed through the doorway from desolation to delight. He opened the door to his soul, and let the light of God shine in (vs 25). He's given the Lord an update on how he got down so low! (vs 26). He shifted his focus from his worries to the wonderful things God has done (vs 27). He has listened once more to the ancient stories and learned the lessons of God's interactions with faithful men and women of old (vs 27). He's opened his emotion to the Lord (vs 28, 29). He's set his heart on learning, living and loving God's law (vss 30-31). And now he's regained his strength. He can get up and run hard with the Lord energizing his stride.

What would it look like for you to follow in this path today?

Time to unload your burdens to the Lord? Time to re-read a favorite



Bible story? Time to take a single step of obedience that could transform your day?

You decide.  
Take the step.

Step into a wide and spacious place with God.  
Eric Liddell won a gold medal. But then he won hearts and minds for Jesus in China. Step into the race with Jesus. Let him energize you today.

**Devo # 2 Running hard with our hearts wide open.**

**I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free. (Psalm 119:32)**

Someone has said that the task of discipleship is to grow a great soul and give it away to the world.

That is what we are seeing in the life of our ancient prayer partner in Psalm 119.

Earlier in this stanza, our author found himself in a tight place (vs 25). He felt trapped, hemmed in. Emotionally, physically, spiritually drained. But then he opened up to the Lord and found a fresh start. A new conversation. A firm resolve.

Now he's energized. And he's taking on the world.

He's running hard. With an open heart. A wide-open heart. Unhampered by fear. Overflowing with love. Joyful in speaking God's truth. How do we get there? How do we sustain it?

When we run hard with Jesus, we feel his strength. He inspires our passion. We see him at work. But then as we work, human energy can be depleted. Disappointment can creep in. Shortfalls can rob us of joy. Pain can arise and inflict a sense of fear. We can shut down. What then?

Return to the beginning point:



Jesus said,

*31 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:31, 32)*

Believe him. Hold fast to what he's said. Just like the author of Psalm 119. Learning, loving, and living the truth of God.

But some may ask what truth? Everyone seems to have their own truth these days.

But Jesus points us to the truth that is him. He said, **"I am the way, the truth and the life..."**What a statement! Jesus reveals his way, his truth, his life. It is the life we need. The truth we need. The path of peace upon which we run.

Tune your spirit to ponder his truth each day. See it with the eyes of your heart. Feel the power of it in your emotion. Then take a step onto the path of peace. Stretch your legs. And run!

Run with Jesus.

Shalom, Pastor Wes

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hey

**The Hey Stanza**  
**Paying Attention on the Path of**  
**Faith**  
**Psalm 119:33-40**

*Hey means “Behold! Look at this!”*

*With Christ, we are stronger than we think.*

**Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight (Psa 119:35).**

On Monday the Lord led Kathryn and me into two adventures that showed us that we are stronger than we think. Our first adventure involved taking a sea-kayak tour. Our second involved a hike up a challenging headland. This just a few weeks past my knee surgery!



One of our favorite places is Rosario State Park. It’s just north of Deception Pass, the gateway to Whidbey Island. The headlands jut out into the sea, calling up memories of our voyage into the Western Hebrides in Scotland. Last time we were at Rosario we noticed kayakers out amongst the kelp beds. “Let’s try

that some time!” we said.

Who knew that a week later, we would find ourselves snapped into a two-person sea-going kayak, partial wetsuit strapped on, life preservers zipped tight, my feet on the rudder pedals, and paddles in hand. Our highly capable guide got us situated, and off we went, following in his expert wake. Across Bowman Bay. Beneath the Rosario Headlands. Amongst the kelp beds. Watching harbor seals sunning themselves. Turning into the wake of the boats motoring past. Looking up to where we had walked before. It was a very

different view.

Afterward, Kathryn and I decided to walk the trail heading south toward Deception Pass. We anticipated a nice flat stroll between two headlands. But as it turned out, we were soon climbing steep trails leading to the top! And that on creaky knees!

My goal for physical therapy for my knee was to be hiking by the end of August. Here we were at the beginning of August, and walking up a steep, rocky trail. Climbing over a tree that was blocking the trail. Pulling ourselves upward by grasping the roots of another tree. It was a challenge!

But we were rewarded with unique views of Deception Pass Bridge. Who knew?

Who knows the rewards that await us as we persevere through challenges?

The Lord knows.

He knew we could handle the challenges. We could paddle across the bay. We could climb a rocky headland. We could enjoy the open sea. We could marvel at the views.

What challenges are you facing? Are they taxing your strength? Follow the direction of the Lord. Move on through the challenge. As you do, may you find many delights.

Shalom, Pastor Wes





## The Wav Stanza

# Connected to the Glory and Goodness of God

## Psalm 119:41-48

*Freedom comes when we are connected to Jesus*

**I walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts. (Psa 119:45).**

The letter Wav, (pronounced vav), means *connection*.

Wav serves an important purpose in the Hebrew language. It can be translated "and," or "but." There are cool grammatical titles for these two functions. Wav *consecutive* means *and*. Wav *adversative* means "but." Wav can connect two complementary ideas, such as in vs 48, "I lift up my hands to your commands which I love, *and* I meditate on your word." Or it can connect two opposing ideas. Such as in vs 46, "I will speak of your statutes before kings, *and* I will not be put to shame."

Wav connects things.

But notice the shape of the wav. It looks like a tent peg, doesn't it? Or a hook, perhaps. Think about it. What are tent pegs and hooks for? They connect things.

That is how it was in the construction of the ancient Tabernacle, the tent where God's presence dwelt in the center of the camp of Israel when they were trekking across Sinai. The Lord told Israel exactly how to build it. (See Exodus 25-40)

They constructed a huge tent made up of sections of cloth that were connected by hooks and pegs. Pegs were needed to fasten the tent to the ground. "Hey Abijah, hand me a wav," a worker would say, "I need to pound it in and secure this line!" Then Lemuel would say, "Grab me a handful of wavs—I need to secure these two panels!" Wav pegs and wav hooks kept the Tabernacle together. They secured the means by which God dwelt among his people. In that tent he provided the means to cover over the sins of his people. In that tent the High Priest would commune with God. When it was complete, the glory of God descended upon the Tabernacle. Everyone saw the cloud by day and the fire by night. God was so gracious to connect a sinful nation to his amazing glory.

But there's more.

When Jesus came, he pitched his tent among us (John 1:14). He connected to us through our common humanity. Now the Lord is building a spiritual house made up of living members. The Holy Spirit lives within each one of us. And among us. He connects us to one another through faith in Jesus. And through Jesus, the Lord provides for the ultimate sacrifice for sin.

The wav connects things!

Take another look at the shape of the Wav. Do you notice that it looks a bit like a nail?

A nail that is driven into wood. So that something can be hung upon it.

A nail that will connect the Presence of God with broken, sinful human beings. A nail that will provide the sacrifice for sins.

Jesus was nailed to that cruel cross. He hung there as the living sacrifice for human sin. Through his connection to cross, the justice of God was satisfied. Our need for forgiveness was filled to overflowing. We who were once broken off from the Lord now have the opportunity for a marvelous connection.

Let that connection set you free. Trust the complete work that Jesus has accomplished. Live according to his word. Give thanks every day. Thrive in your connection to the Lord. Shalom, Pastor Wes

# The Way Stanza Connected to the Glory and Goodness of God

part 2

## Psalm 119:41-48

*Freedom comes when we release others to Jesus.*

**I walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts. (Psa 119:45).**

What does it feel like to let go of an offense you have suffered? For Bruce Wilkinson, it feels like being set free!



Dr. Wilkinson has written a marvelous book called *You Were Born for This; 7 Keys to a Life of Predictable Miracles*.

In it he tells the story of Mary Ann, a mother who had suffered the sorrowful loss of a child by drowning. She had left to go to work, and the babysitter had gotten distracted. Her teenaged son was in his room.

*Dr. Bruce Wilkinson* Her husband was sick and in bed. No one noticed that the two littlest children were no longer in the house. Until it was too late. By the time their absence was noted, the youngest had drowned in the neighbor's pool.

Now it was Christmas, and on behalf of the local inner-city mission, Bruce Wilkinson and his wife Darlene were delivering gifts and groceries to their home. Mary Ann and her daughter Tess were full of gratitude for the gifts. And then touched by their generosity, Mary Ann began to weep. "Are you okay?" Darlene asked.

"My baby drowned," Mary Ann sobbed. "She was only two years old!" Wilkinson and his wife were overcome with compassion. They began silently praying that God would show them how to bring healing to this grieving family. And that's when the conversation took a surprising turn.

"When did this happen?" they asked.

"Eighteen years ago," she said. The grief was still fresh after 18 years. Her anger at the situation had kept her sorrow fresh. She still resented the babysitter. She blamed her teenaged son. She was

bitter toward her husband, who had by this time left her. She was blaming herself for leaving to go to work that day. She blamed God.

Wilkinson asked, "Would you say you have been in torment?"

"Yes, I guess I would," she said, wiping her tears.

"Would you like for that to stop?"

"Well, yes," she said. "But how could that happen? We can't get her back!"

"Maybe that's why God sent us here today," Wilkinson said. "Not just to deliver these meals but to bring a much bigger miracle. God is ready to set you free—completely, right here on Christmas Day in your kitchen!"

And that's exactly what happened. Mary Ann was gently led through the steps of forgiveness that Jesus taught us. (See Matthew 18) She let go of her bitterness, anger, self-hatred and vengeance. She took every step. So did her daughter. When Dr. Wilkinson and his wife left the house that day, Mary Ann and her daughter Tess were free for the first time in eighteen years. (*You Were Born For This*, pages 194, 195)

They had been set free by the power of Jesus' forgiveness flowing through them. As they released others from the power of blame, they found release for themselves.

What is binding you up today?

What steps of connection with Christ do you need to take? Allow his freedom to be formed in you.

Shalom, Pastor Wes



Zayin means “sword”.



<sup>50</sup>. My comfort in my suffering is this:  
Your promise preserves my life.

## The Zayin Stanza Protecting & Nurturing Our New Life in Jesus Psalm 119:49-56

**Reflect.** Read over the stanza and make a prayer to the Lord. What is it like to pray this section of Psalm 119?

**Meditate.** ReRead vss 49-56. Select one verse that encourages you and ponder that in silence for a moment. Then write a note or two about what you see.

**Remember.** In this passage, our psalmist prays that God would remember what he had spoken to him (vs 49). He is not afraid that God has forgotten his word! But he wants the Lord to act on what he has said. Then in vs 52, our ancient prayer warrior says that he will remember what God has spoken in his word. What is it like for us to remember what God has said, and know that he remembers us? That he will fulfill his good word in our lives?

**Receive.** Two times our psalmist speaks of God’s comfort (vss 50, and 52). In what ways does God’s word speak comfort to you? What is it like when he speaks comfort to others through you?

**The weapons of our warfare.** Read vss 51 and 53. David faced down a fierce foe in the giant Goliath. He came against this intimidating warrior in the Name of the Lord with only a sling and stone. What impact did David’s courage and faith have upon the battle that day?

Read 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

<sup>3</sup> For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. <sup>4</sup> The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. <sup>5</sup> We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

In what ways does God work through spiritual weapons to advance his mission in the world? How does this nourish us as his warriors?

**Worship.** Read vss 54-55. How does celebrating God's majesty in song encourage you in the battle? What is it like to think of God in the watches of the night?

**Practice.** Read vs. 56. What is your favorite practice that keeps you focused in the Lord?

**Pray.** How can we pray for one another? For the expansion of Christ's mission among us?

<sup>49</sup> Remember your word to your servant,  
for you have given me hope.

<sup>50</sup> My comfort in my suffering is this:  
Your promise preserves my life.

<sup>51</sup> The arrogant mock me unmercifully,  
but I do not turn from your law.

<sup>52</sup> I remember, LORD, your ancient laws,  
and I find comfort in them.

<sup>53</sup> Indignation grips me because of the wicked,  
who have forsaken your law. <sup>54</sup> Your decrees are the theme of my  
song wherever I lodge.

<sup>55</sup> In the night, LORD,  
I remember your name,  
that I may keep your law.

<sup>56</sup> This has been my practice:  
I obey your precepts.



For further meditation on Psalm 119:50, see Greg Johnson's story in the forward to Dr. Wes' book [He Wakens Me - How to Pray When You Don't Know What to Pray](#)



**The Heth Stanza**  
**Better is One Day in Your Courts**  
**Psalm 119:57-64**

In this section of Psalm 119, each verse begins with the letter Heth. The ancient Egyptian hieroglyph for Heth meant courtyard. What is it like to feel surrounded by the Lord, as the walls surround the courtyard of an ancient home?

Take a moment to enjoy this refreshing scene at Cascade Falls on Mt. Constitution, Orcas Island, WA.

Kathryn and I had such a lovely time there on vacation. We rested, walked in the mountains, sailed on the seas, and enjoyed the Lord together.

We all need to seek the refreshment of the Lord each and every day. That is why we are immersing ourselves in Psalm 119 during this season. Despite bad air, COVID-19, and not seeing a lot of people face-to-face, we can enjoy the Lord! The psalmist celebrated his connection with the Lord. Let's review our verse for this section of Psalm 119.

**You are my portion, O Lord; I have promised to obey your words.**  
**Psalm 119:57**

When the Lord gives himself to us, he becomes our deep satisfaction and delight.

When you look out your window at home, what do you see? At our house, we look out into our back window and see garden and lawn, fruit trees that gave us cherries and plums, faded lilacs and now

barren blueberry bushes. And over the fence, we see our neighbor's trampoline. We see what belongs to us, and we see what belongs to others.

What do you see?

Our ancient prayer partner looked out upon his life scene, and he declared that what was of greatest value to him was God himself.

He called God his "portion."

That is, he saw God as his most valued treasure in life. He saw God as it were, as his back porch, his front gate, his fields stretching away to the horizon. God is his surrounding Presence. You see, portion is about inheritance—the ancient family lands and fields that were passed on from generation to generation. For the ancient Jews, their inheritance was evidence that God was rewarding each generation for their obedience to the Word of God.

In our lives, we can say that when we learn, love and live the Word of God, we experience the blessing of God. He himself becomes our most valuable possession. More important than our physical house; God himself becomes our home. More important than the property around our house; the Lord himself occupies the space around us. He lives with us now and he promises a home forever with him through Jesus.

If you have inherited something from your parents or grandparents, you may have received only a part of the estate. But the Lord gives us far more than "our share." He gives us the Kingdom of God. It is of infinite value. No one can measure the expanse of God's kingdom. It extends to the ends of the earth; it reaches to the heavens.

Live each day as a resident of Christ's kingdom. Know that through your faith in Jesus, you belong to him, and he belongs to you. He surrounds you. He holds you securely in his hands.

God is our portion.

He is your fair share; and much, much more.

Shalom, Pastor Wes



**Teth is the wheel  
that takes you  
someplace good!**

**70. Their hearts are  
callous and unfeeling  
but I delight  
in your law.**



## **The Teth Stanza Living the Good Life with Jesus Psalm 119: 65-72**

**Their hearts are callous and unfeeling; but I delight in your law.  
Psalm 119:70**

How does a person move from a paralyzed heart to pure delight?

Take a lesson from Psalm 119:65-72.

In this passage, we get to listen in as our psalmist prays about arrogant people who are spreading lies about him. He is telling God about how this trouble feels to him. And we get to see his response to injustice, and what he does with his thoughts and feelings. For many people, such wounds can be overwhelming. Negative thoughts can begin to dominate. Our feelings can go sour. We can harbor resentment. Our hearts can become hardened to the needs of others. We can act out in anger. We can inflict harm on others.

But there is a better way!

We can move toward delight. How?

Recognize that there is a profound contrast between the arrogant who judge others and those who enjoy learning, living and loving God's law! In this psalm, our ancient prayer partner felt the pressures of a troubled life. He speaks of going astray from the path of

the Lord. But then God sent affliction as his teacher. It was in his suffering that he turned around and walked in surrender to the Lord.

But still, there were some people who did not give him a chance to make a change. For them, he was only one way—and they made sure everyone else heard about it!

So much so that they heaped up untruths, spinning lies about his character and his actions.

How do you feel when someone says something terrible about you? It can get under our skin! Especially if they have a little bit of truth mixed in! You know, a lie has more power if it hooks into at least a little bit of reality!

But our psalmist employed a counter-strategy. He didn't let what they were saying get under his skin. Instead, he refocused his thoughts upon what God said about him. He pondered the law of God. He saw the goodness of God in the stories of scripture. He felt the kindness of God in what the Lord was doing for him. And he let that be the center of his thoughts and feelings.

How about us? What are you focusing on today?

Take delight in what God has said. Read the Words of God. Ponder them. Pray them. And then go and act upon them. Do the best you can especially for those who need a transformed heart.

Shalom, Pastor Wes

Yodh



<sup>75</sup> I know, O LORD, that your laws are righteous, and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me. <sup>76</sup> May your unfailing love be my comfort, according to your promise to your servant.



## The Yodh Stanza Becoming a Person Who Sparks Joy Psalm 119:73-80

יהוה

Yodh- the 10th letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

Yodh means "arm" or "hand," and its form suggests a hand that is reaching toward heaven. But

when the Lord revealed the meaning of his Divine Name, he showed that his Hand was reaching toward earth.

Yod is the first letter of the Name of the Lord. Yahweh means I AM THAT I AM. The individual letters mean Hand, Behold, Nail, Behold. Therefore, the core identify of the Lord is "Look! I AM the God of the nail-pierced Hand. And look again!" How does this inform your faith? Your worship?

***Put your hope in the words of your Creator***

**Read verses 73 and 74.** <sup>73</sup> *Your hands made me and formed me; give me understanding to learn your commands.* <sup>74</sup> *May those who fear you rejoice when they see me, for I have put my hope in your word.*

The psalmist reflects on the intimacy of God's hand forming him in the womb. What a powerful example of God's hand reaching into our world! How does this inspire him? Our writer wants to learn God's commands so he can become a source of joy for others. How does this challenge you? Inspire you?

***Joyfully receive the loving correction of the Lord***

**Read verses 75-77.** <sup>75</sup> *I know, O LORD, that your laws are righteous, and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me.* <sup>76</sup> *May your unfailing love be my comfort, according to your promise to your servant.* <sup>77</sup> *Let your compassion come to me that I may live, for your law is my delight.*

Our writer appeals to the love and compassion of the Lord as he goes through a time of correction. He is hurting! What is it like to trust the goodness of God when we are going through trials? How is this like James 1:2-5? Do you feel beloved by the Lord?

***Turn bad people over to the Lord; Seek the company of really good people (and be one yourself!)***

**Read verses 78-80.** <sup>78</sup> *May the arrogant be put to shame for wronging me without cause; but I will meditate on your precepts.* <sup>79</sup> *May those who fear you turn to me, those who understand your statutes.* <sup>80</sup> *May I wholeheartedly follow your decrees, that I may not be put to shame.*

To what extent do hurtful, harmful people impact your life? What is it like when you turn them over to the Lord? To what level do you allow good people to be in your life? In what ways do they balance out the impact of the bad people?

**Re-read verse 80.** What are you doing to become a really great person who sparks joy in others?

Take time to pray for those who need the hand of God in their life.





***Kaph*** —The  
Lord holding us  
in the palm of  
his hand

<sup>87</sup> They almost wiped  
me from the earth,  
but I have not  
forsaken your  
precepts.



## **The Kaph Stanza** **Longing for the Hand of God to Move** **Psalm 119:81-88**

***Kaph***—*Kaph* means the palm of the hand.

***Thank God for holding onto you***

*Isaiah 49:15, 16* <sup>15</sup> “Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! <sup>16</sup> See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.

*John 10:27- 29* <sup>27</sup> My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. <sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. <sup>29</sup> My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. <sup>30</sup> I and the Father are one.”

In what ways does this teaching give you peace and joy in life?

***Press through distress with hope***

<sup>81</sup> My soul faints with longing for your salvation, but I have put my hope in your word. <sup>82</sup> My eyes fail, looking for your promise; I say, “When will you comfort me?” <sup>83</sup> Though I am like a wineskin in the smoke, I do not forget your decrees.

Our warrior poet compares his life to a wineskin ruined by smoke. What does this say to you about the state of his soul? What is his chief complaint? What keeps him obeying the Word

and calling upon the Lord? What does this show us about his faith? In what ways does his faith encourage yours?

***Entrust your life to the justice of God***

*<sup>84</sup> How long must your servant wait? When will you punish my persecutors? <sup>85</sup> The arrogant dig pits to trap me, contrary to your law. <sup>86</sup> All your commands are trustworthy; help me, for I am being persecuted without cause. They almost wiped me from the earth, but I have not forsaken your precepts.*

What do we learn about our warrior poet's situation from this part of his prayer? What does it take to be this honest with the Lord? How is his loyalty to God being tested? When have you had to wait for something that you urgently needed? What was it like to trust God during that time?

***Live to love God and obey his truth***

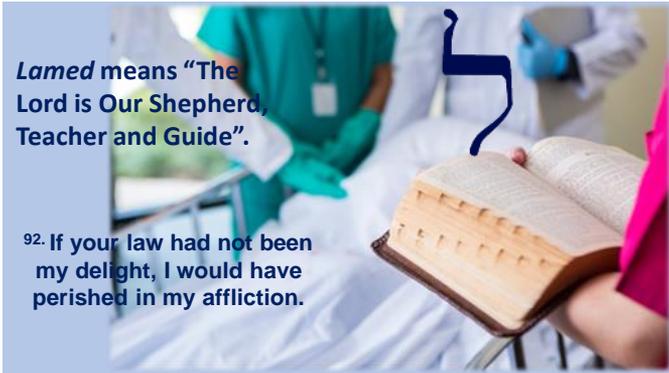
*<sup>88</sup> In your unfailing love preserve my life,  
that I may obey the statutes of your mouth.*

This is one of nine times in Psalm 119 that our prayer warrior asks God to preserve his life. Two times he affirms that God has saved his life already. What does this tell you about the kind of life situation he is facing? He wants to keep on living so he can keep on obeying the Lord. This is a great personal mission statement! What is yours?

Disciples influence others toward Jesus. Who are you influencing? Take time to pray for them just now.

Reach out to a friend and offer to pray for them.

Shalom, Pastor Wes



## **The Lamed Stanza**

### **Learning to Value What Lasts Forever**

#### **Psalm 119:89-96**

***Lamed is shaped like a shepherd’s staff.*** It reminds us that the Lord is our Shepherd, Teacher and Guide. What is it like when the Lord prods us with his Shepherd’s staff? Can you give an example?

***Put your trust in what God has established***

<sup>89</sup> *Your word, LORD, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens.*

<sup>90</sup> *Your faithfulness continues through all generations; you established the earth, and it endures.*

<sup>91</sup> *Your laws endure to this day, for all things serve you.*

Circle all the words that are about things that last. Which of these inspire you most? Why? Why is it important to focus on the eternal when we are distressed by what’s going on around us?

***Take joy in the Word that keeps you going***

<sup>92</sup> *If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction.* <sup>93</sup> *I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have preserved my life.*

Our warrior poet feels the threat of death hanging over him. But he credits God's Word for keeping him going. Is it too much to say that the Word of God keeps us alive? It revives our spirits; it gives us assurance beyond the grave. How can it keep us alive? Can you give an example?

### ***Seek God's saving grace***

<sup>94</sup> *Save me, for I am yours; I have sought out your precepts.*

<sup>95</sup> *The wicked are waiting to destroy me, but I will ponder your statutes.*

When we pray for rescue, we are coming to God from a very vulnerable place in life. What is it like to make a prayer like this one? How do we keep our focus on the presence of God and his Word when bad people are out to harm us? What kind of discipline does this require? What does it mean to seek out the precepts of the Lord and ponder his statutes?

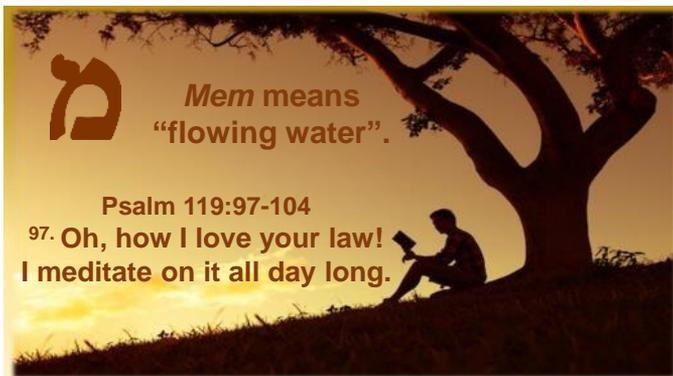
### ***Trust the measureless sufficiency of Christ***

<sup>96</sup> *To all perfection I see a limit, but your commands are boundless.*

The best of human effort will always leave us wanting more. The commands of God, however, come to us from the heavens. In what ways do the commands of God satisfy? How do they help us touch the eternal? What does Jesus say? (see John 14:21)

Reach out to someone who needs a touch of the Lord. Be a shepherd with Jesus and extend his love and care.

*Shalom, Pastor Wes*



**The Mem Stanza**  
**Thinking of God All Through the Day**  
**Psalm 119:97-104**

**The Hebrew letter Mem** means flowing water.

***Think of God and grow refreshed***

*Proverbs 18:4*

*<sup>4</sup> The words of the mouth are deep waters,  
but the fountain of wisdom is a rushing stream.*

Biblical meditation is like walking by a flowing stream and listening to the waters fall. It provides refreshment to the spirit, mind and body. When we relax in God's presence with a precious truth from his word, our heart rate actually slows down, the tensions in our bodies dissipate, and our mind and spirit become focused. In what ways does Biblical meditation refresh you?

***Think of God and grow wise***

*<sup>98</sup> Your commands are always with me and make me wiser than  
my enemies. <sup>99</sup> I have more insight than all my teachers,  
for I meditate on your statutes.*

Wisdom in the Bible means skillful living. To live skillfully, we must think deeply about God's commands thus gaining insight into how they apply to the challenges of our life. Jonathan and his armor

bearer overcame a squadron of enemy soldiers because they wisely chose their field of battle (1 Samuel 14). What other examples of strategic wisdom can you give, either from the Bible or from life experience?

### ***Obey God and gain understanding***

*<sup>100</sup> I have more understanding than the elders,  
for I obey your precepts.*

Who would you rather have as an ally, an inexperienced young person who obeys the Lord or an older person who has had lots of life experience, but who does whatever they please? What does such a young person understand that the adult does not?

*<sup>101</sup> I have kept my feet from every evil path so that I might obey  
your word. <sup>102</sup> I have not departed from your laws,  
for you yourself have taught me.*

What does resisting temptation teach us? What does it feel like to learn a life lesson straight from the Lord?

### ***Take pleasure in what God has revealed***

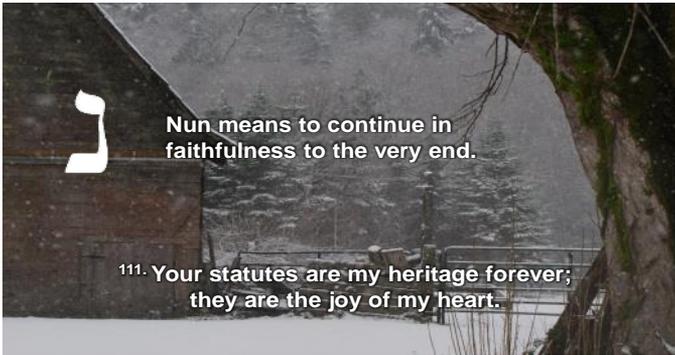
*<sup>103</sup> How sweet are your words to my taste,  
sweeter than honey to my mouth!*

What is a particularly sweet verse of scripture for you?

### ***Grow your passion for the truth***

*<sup>104</sup> I gain understanding from your precepts;  
therefore I hate every wrong path.*

Understanding means to be able to discern between competing options. We can choose the best and put aside the worst. In what ways does God give us more energy as we choose what is best? As we refuse what is bad for us and others?



Nun means to continue in  
faithfulness to the very end.

<sup>111</sup>. Your statutes are my heritage forever;  
they are the joy of my heart.

## **The Nun Stanza**

### **Staying True to God Every Day of Your Life**

#### **Psalm 119:105-112**

***Nun means to continue in faithfulness to the very end.***

*Psalm 72:17 May his name endure forever; may it continue (YINUN) as long as the sun. Then all nations will be blessed through him, and they will call him blessed.*

Psalm 72 describes how God's people may pray for their king. But the only King whose name endures forever is King Jesus. In what ways does this call forth faithfulness from all nations?

***Follow God with firm resolve***

<sup>105</sup> *Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.* <sup>106</sup> *I have taken an oath and confirmed it, that I will follow your righteous laws.*

What is it like to walk in darkness without a light? What is it like to have the light of God's truth shining on our path? Our Psalmist makes a firm vow to follow God. What can be the impact of making such a promise? Can you give an example?

### ***Praise God through seasons of suffering***

<sup>107</sup> *I have suffered much; preserve my life, LORD, according to your word.* <sup>108</sup> *Accept, LORD, the willing praise of my mouth, and teach me your laws.*

What is it like to praise God when we are in suffering? How willing are we to praise the Lord when we are in pain? How does it change us to do so? In what ways is the Lord worthy of praise even when we are in pain?

### ***Cling to God in times of danger***

<sup>109</sup> *Though I constantly take my life in my hands, I will not forget your law.* <sup>110</sup> *The wicked have set a snare for me, but I have not strayed from your precepts.*

Our psalmist lived on the edge all the time. He was aware that his enemies wanted to see him utterly fail. What is it like to live with a warrior's outlook in our time? How does staying faithful to scripture equip us to fight the good fight?

### ***Enjoy the Lord God till your dying breath***

<sup>111</sup> *Your statutes are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart.* <sup>112</sup> *My heart is set on keeping your decrees to the very end.*

Our inheritance in Christ creates opportunities for joy that lasts forever. But our joy is tested by the troubles of this life. How does meditation on eternal truth keep us thankful and strong?

A young disciple asked his mentor to help him focus when he was praying. The older wise mentor told him that when he began his prayers, he should tell himself that he would die when he said the "amen." What effect do you suppose this had on the young man's prayers? In what ways does focusing on the day of our death keep us intent on following well in this life?

Shalom, Pastor Wes



Samekh means to transfer power by the laying on of hands.

<sup>116</sup>. Sustain me, my God,  
according to your promise,  
and I will live;  
do not let my hopes be  
dashed.



## The Samekh Stanza The Hands of God Upon Us Psalm 119:113-120

***Samekh means to transfer power by the laying on of hands***

*1 Peter 5:5, 6*

*“God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.”*

<sup>6</sup> *Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.*

What does it feel like to welcome the authority of God’s hand upon your life? What does it feel like to resist God’s hand? What do we gain by welcoming his touch?

***Reject evil, receive what is good***

<sup>113</sup> *I hate double-minded people, but I love your law.* <sup>114</sup> *You are my refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in your word.*

<sup>115</sup> *Away from me, you evildoers, that I may keep the commands of my God!*

What does it feel like to not have your mind made up about following the Lord? What does it take to make the decision? Elijah challenged the compromised worship of the people in his day. What is it like when we need to resist the negative influence of people who are ambivalent about God?

### ***Count on God to hold you up***

<sup>116</sup> *Sustain me, my God, according to your promise, and I will live; do not let my hopes be dashed.* <sup>117</sup> *Uphold me, and I will be delivered; I will always have regard for your decrees.*

God's supportive hand is upon the person who relies on his promise. In what ways did God sustain Elijah after his great battle with the prophets of Baal? (1 Kings 19) How does God sustain us each day?

### ***Accept the true judgments of the Lord***

<sup>118</sup> *You reject all who stray from your decrees, for their delusions come to nothing.* <sup>119</sup> *All the wicked of the earth you discard like dross; therefore I love your statutes.*

This is a description of God's rejection of a person who believes false things that lead them to complete emptiness. This person resists God's hand upon them. God reaches out his hand, but we each have to accept it. The psalmist loves the truth of God, including his justice on evildoers. There is not one righteous, no not one. We become right with God only through Jesus. What feelings arise in you when you think of people facing the judgment of God without Jesus as their Defender? How does this inspire your witness?

### ***Accept your ultimate accountability before God***

<sup>120</sup> *My flesh trembles in fear of you; I stand in awe of your laws.*

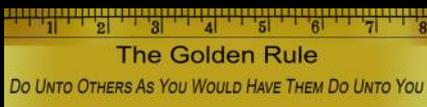
When we think about the consuming fire of God that is an expression of his glorious Being, it is right that we should be respond with fear (Heb 12:29). The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Prov 9:10). But perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18). In what ways has the perfect love of Jesus given you confidence before God? In what ways can the presence and power of God still be overwhelming for us? How can this actually support us?

*Shalom, Pastor Wes*



Ayin means “eyes that see.” so that we can understand and do the right thing.

<sup>127</sup>. Because I love your commands more than gold, more than pure gold, <sup>128</sup>. and because I consider all your precepts right, I hate every wrong path.



**The Ayin Stanza**  
***Doing Right When We've Been Done Wrong***  
*Psalm 119:121-128*

*2 Chronicles 16:9*

*For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.*

*Ephesians 1:18, 19*

<sup>18</sup> *I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, <sup>19</sup> and his incomparably great power for us who believe.*

As you read the psalm, choose a word or a phrase to ponder. Lift your thoughts in surrender to the Lord.

***Watch patiently for God's expressions of mercy***

<sup>121</sup> *I have done what is righteous and just;  
do not leave me to my oppressors.*

<sup>122</sup> *Ensure your servant's well-being;  
do not let the arrogant oppress me.*

<sup>123</sup> *My eyes fail, looking for your salvation,  
looking for your righteous promise.*

## ***Trust God's love and wisdom***

<sup>124</sup> *Deal with your servant according to your love  
and teach me your decrees.*

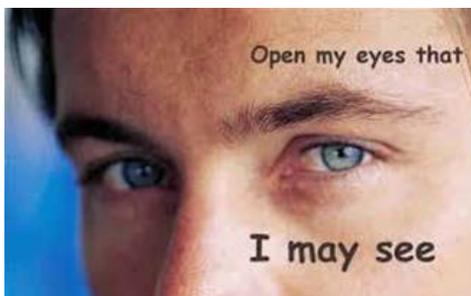
<sup>125</sup> *I am your servant; give me discernment  
that I may understand your statutes.*

## ***Ask God to intervene***

<sup>126</sup> *It is time for you to act, LORD;  
your law is being broken.*

## ***Align your passions with the golden rule of God***

<sup>127</sup> *Because I love your commands  
more than gold, more than pure gold,  
<sup>128</sup> and because I consider all your precepts right,  
I hate every wrong path.*



What does it feel like to you to know that God has his eyes upon you?

To what extent does this speak comfort to your soul? In what ways does it spur you on to love and good works?

Shalom, Pastor Wes

**פ**

*Pe means “mouth,” and by extension, “word, expression, speech or breath.”*

**132. Turn to me and have mercy on me, as you always do to those who love your name.**



## **The Pe Stanza** **Experiencing the Wonderful Words of Life** **Psalm 119:129-136**

### **A Prayer that's Filled with Hope.**

**Turn to me and have mercy on me, as you always do to those who love your name. Psalm 119:132**

What comes to mind when you ask God to turn to you and take note of what's going on in your life?

One man wrote of how his sin was the first thing on his mind when he thought of the eyes of the Lord upon him. Our ancient prayer warrior feels the same.

It is true that the eyes of the Lord run throughout the whole world seeking to strengthen those whose hearts are completely his (2 Chronicles 16:9). But when we look upon our own hearts, we see that they are often divided. We long for a more complete love. Our ancient prayer partner felt the same. Like him, we need the Lord to look upon us with mercy. Merciful Savior; have mercy on me!

But our prayer partner appeals to God as the faithful One who always looks with mercy upon those who love his name. Always. That means on our worst day, when we are most overwhelmed, God's mercy is upon us. That means when we have acted badly, God's mercy is ready to cover over our sin. When we are

struggling with habitual sin, God has got it covered. He has habitual mercy, and it overflows. Through the cross of Jesus, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). Thank you, Lord, for your mercy.

But what does it mean to love God's name?

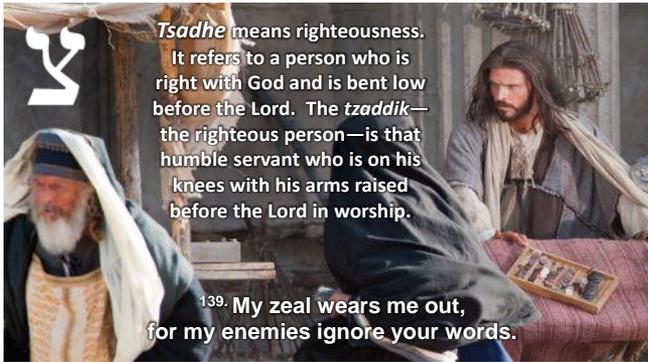
In the sermon based on this stanza, we discussed how God reveals his character and his mission when he opens up to us about his Name. We saw that the letters of God's covenant name, Yahweh, show that he is the self-existent God whose hand is twice revealed by the nails that would pierce the Son of his Glory. Yodh—which means "hand", is the first letter of Yahweh. It is also the first letter of Yeshua, Jesus. Vaw—which means "hook," or "nail," is the third letter of Yahweh, and the third letter of Yeshua. The Name Yeshua means "Yahweh Saves." Are you loving this?

The letter hey (our h) appears twice in the Name Yahweh. It means "revelation." In the First Coming of Jesus, the hand of God would be revealed as Jesus' hands are pierced by the nails upon the cross. In his Second Coming, the glory of Jesus will be revealed when Israel recognizes him by the scars in his hands and feet. They will look on him whom they have pierced, Zechariah writes, and they will mourn for him as for an only Son. (Zechariah 12:10)

Because of Jesus, the Father always has mercy upon those who love him. When you feel badly about your failures, focus your attention on the Name of Jesus. Be glad that when the Father looks upon you, he sees the moral integrity of his Son. Better that he should see Jesus and not us!

Now, make this prayer your own. *Turn to me and have mercy on me, as you always do to those who love your name.* Then ask God to turn and have mercy on those that you love and serve.

*Shalom, Pastor Wes*



## **The Tsadhe Stanza Energized by the Moral Integrity of God Psalm 119:137-144**

### **Renewing Our Energy with Jesus**

#### **My zeal wears me out, for my enemies ignore your words— Psalm 119:139**

What do you do to renew your energy when you have poured it all out? Especially when others are pushing back on you? It takes energy to do life and to serve Jesus!

It can be exiting when we get to speak of his truth to someone who needs to know more about Jesus. But it can also deplete our energy. Especially if that involves lots of hours. Lots of care. And if someone writes us off or pushes back hard. Emotional depletion can find us.

It's challenging to serve when the people we care about ignore what God says in the Bible. If only they would turn away from the destructive path they are on! If only they would listen to Jesus! It would be a lot easier for everyone! Including us!

It's hard to be close to someone who makes wrong choices. It can drain our energy.

That's how it was for Jesus.

He taught great crowds of people about the kingdom of heaven. He mentored his close followers, up close and personal. Then he watched the crowds fall away. He saw the look of doubt in the

eyes of his disciples. You know it broke his heart. How did he replenish himself?

He took time away. Up on a mountain with his Father. Up in the early morning before anyone could disturb him. He wasn't hiding from his responsibilities. He was hiding in the Father so that he could reengage with the world.

One time he took a nap in a boat while it was being tossed about in a storm! His disciples were working hard to keep the boat from sinking. They were pouring out their strength trying to get the boat to safe harbor. What must they have thought to see Jesus sleeping while they were working so hard!?

One of them woke him up with these stunning words: "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

They felt abandoned. Even in the presence of the Son of God. Like them, we become depleted. When situations or people push back hard. We feel frustrated. We feel powerless. When we are under threat, it can seem that God is not with us. But he is.

Jesus got up from his nap. He calmed the storm. And he calmed the hearts of his followers.

Listen. Jesus knows the storms we are in. He knows how to rescue us. He knows how to renew our energies when we have poured them out.

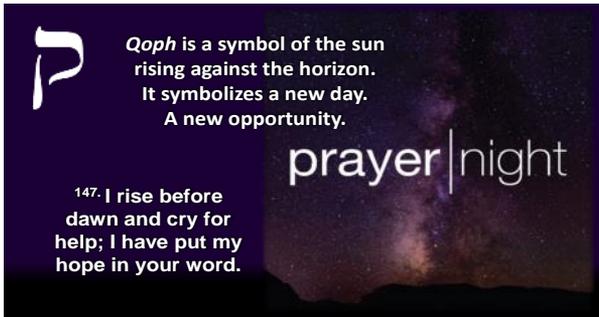
What can we do? We can do what the ancient author of Psalm 119 did. He renewed his weary soul by resting in what God has said.

He takes delight in the commands of the Lord. (vs 143).

Join the renewal! Enjoy the Lord. Then rise up, and like Jesus, take on the storms of life that assail you. Others will be blessed!

*Shalom, Pastor Wes*





## **The Qoph Stanza Loving God in the In Between Times Psalm 119:145-152**

### **Seeking the Lord in the Dark of Night**

Read Psalm 119:147, 148. (See picture on the next page.)

What keeps you awake at night? We have all had the experience of waking in the night with a serious concern on our mind. We try to go back to sleep, but our body is tense. The thoughts stirring in our brain have put our bodies on alert. We feel like we are peering into the darkness as some criminal ransacks our homes! We come to the Lord seeking peace of mind.

Our ancient prayer partner spent a sleepless night, his mind rife with concerns. But he broke up the pattern of anxiety and distress. He turned his restless thoughts toward the reality of God's presence. He made a heart-felt cry to the Lord.

We are not told whether he got back to sleep or not! We are not even told if he gained peace in the night. But we know that he lived to write about it. His distress didn't take him out. It didn't sideline him from encouraging others.

Corrie ten Boom wrote a brilliant analysis of the way worry works. She wrote, *"Worry is a cycle of inefficient thoughts whirling around a center of fear."*

Think about it. Worry is a cycle. The same things keep coming to our mind. Over and over again. They command our attention. There is a center to it all—it's fear! Something has caused us to become afraid. So our minds are attempting to problem solve

our fear. That's why our thoughts race.

That's why we keep cycling through what could happen and what we should do about it...or not do! Back and forth it goes.

But meditation, the Bible tells us, is also a cycle of thoughts. But it does not center on a point of fear. It centers on a point of faith. Our psalmist meditates on the promises of God. So we may say, "*meditation is a cycle of efficient thoughts whirling around a center of faith.*" We have the same kind of thought pattern. But instead of repeating what causes us distress, instead we repeat what causes us relief: the Words of God become a new center. A place of faith. An invitation to peace.

Here is a beautiful solution to a sleepless night: repurpose the time to tune your soul to the Lord. Yes, anxiety can keep us ever watchful in the night. We can worry over questions that come again and again: Will I have the energy I need for tomorrow? Will I be able to cope without a good night's rest? But instead of laying awake in frustration, redirect your thoughts.

Take a moment to meditate on the Lord. Choose a promise of God that touches your feelings. Identify a character in the Bible who lived by faith. Notice how they were trusting in the Lord. What they were feeling about the Lord. See if you can feel what they were feeling. See if you can sense the Presence of the Lord.

May you rest well!

*Shalom,*  
*Pastor*  
*Wes*



Psalm 119:147, 148

I rise before dawn and  
cry for help; I have put  
my hope in your word.

<sup>148</sup> My eyes stay open  
through the watches of  
the night that I may  
meditate on your  
promises.

*Resh* refers to a head that's bowed down and is about to be lifted up.



<sup>160</sup>. All your words are true;  
all your righteous laws are eternal.

## **The Resh Stanza** **Lifted from the Depths to the Heights** **Psalm 119:153-160**

### **Resting in the Everlasting Truth of God**

**All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal.**  
**Psalm 119:160**

What news source do you count on to keep up with what's happening in the world? How trustworthy do you find it to be?

Facebook made a commitment to take down misinformation about the COVID19 virus vaccines. But one person's news is another person's "fake news."

So let me ask again, what do you count on as your authoritative source?

And how does it make you feel?

Informed? Motivated? Encouraged? Confused? Despairing? Too much news can be disabling. It's too big or too far away for us to do anything about it! Or it is too upsetting.

But the Good News we receive from reading, meditating and praying over Scripture provides much more than correct information. It creates fresh life in us. It enables us to face life. It moves us with love. And it inspires peace.

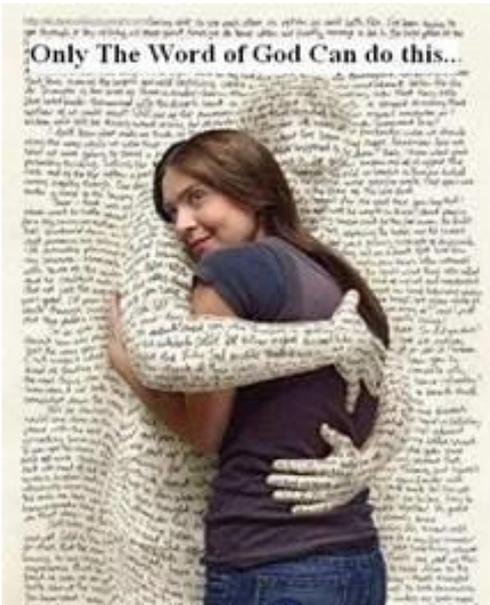
What will you do today to listen to the true words of the living God? Take a moment and ponder the following verse.

**All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal.**  
**Psalm 119:160**

What one word stands out to you? What one word calls you to love God and trust him more? Be still with that word for a minute.

May you listen deeply. May you gain insight. May you act wisely.

*Shalom, Pastor Wes*



**Sin and Shin  
(seen and  
sheen):**



**165 Great peace have those who love your law,  
and nothing can make them stumble.**



**The Sin and Shin Stanza**  
***Experiencing the Unshakeable Peace of God***  
***Shalom from El Shaddai***  
***Psalm 119:161-168***

The 21<sup>st</sup> letter of the Hebrew alphabet does double duty. It is actually two letters, Sin and Shin, and functions as our English S and SH. The shape of this letter reminds us of the flames rising from the altar of sacrifice, foreshadowing the power of Christ's sacrificial death. It symbolizes the peace of God brought through repentance and forgiveness.

*Ephesians 2:13-16*

*<sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup> For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility <sup>15</sup> by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, <sup>16</sup> and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.*

How is it that Jesus himself is our peace? In what ways does Jesus do away with the hostility that often exists between competing people groups? How does he create peace between people and God?

### ***Treasure the overcoming power of God's words***

*<sup>161</sup> Rulers persecute me without cause, but my heart trembles at your word. <sup>162</sup> I rejoice in your promise like one who finds great spoil. <sup>163</sup> I hate and detest falsehood but I love your law.*

When Joseph heard the message from the angel to take Mary as his wife, he was stirred to his very core. When we hear truth from God that penetrates our hearts like a sword, it gives us great resolve. In what ways does this give us strength to stand up against the pressures of this world?

### ***Stabilize your life through loving God's law***

*<sup>164</sup> Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous laws. <sup>165</sup> Great peace have those who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble.*

Our ancient prayer warrior has made it his habit to praise the Lord all the time. In what ways does this change a person? Having peace *with* God opens us up to the peace *of* God. Loving God's word deepens that peace. In what ways have you witnessed the steadiness of those who trust the Lord in that way? Can you give an example?

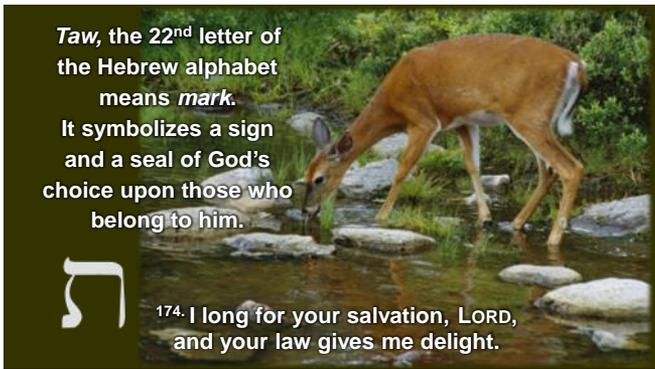
### ***Follow hard after the Lord who knows you completely***

*<sup>166</sup> I wait for your salvation, LORD, and I follow your commands. <sup>167</sup> I obey your statutes, for I love them greatly. <sup>168</sup> I obey your precepts and your statutes, for all my ways are known to you.*

In Psalm 139, David celebrates how God is with him all the time. *Where can I go from your Spirit*, he asks. Yet we often are called to wait for the Lord to express his saving purpose in a situation we are facing. How does staying faithful in obedience to the Lord sustain us while we wait for the Lord to act?

*Shalom, Pastor Wes*





***The Taw Stanza***  
***The Marks of an Uncompromised Life***  
*Praying with Courageous Faith*  
Psalm 119:169-176

**Taw** means *mark*. It is a sign and seal of God's choice upon the lives of those who trust in him.

*Ezekiel 9:3, 4*

*<sup>3</sup>Now the glory of the God of Israel went up from above the cherubim, where it had been, and moved to the threshold of the temple. Then the LORD called to the man clothed in linen who had the writing kit at his side <sup>4</sup>and said to him, "Go throughout the city of Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of those who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in it."*

What did God look for in those he marked out for himself? In what ways does mourning the sins of the world set us up for the hand of God upon our lives? Take time just now to feel the sorrow caused by some particular evil in the world.

*Ephesians 1:13, 14 <sup>13</sup>And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>14</sup>who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.*

The Holy Spirit is the mark of God upon those who believe and receive Jesus. In what ways can we see the marks of the Holy Spirit in other believers?

***Trust that God receives your prayer***

<sup>169</sup> *May my cry come before you, LORD; give me understanding according to your word.* <sup>170</sup> *May my supplication come before you; deliver me according to your promise.* Our ancient prayer warrior asks that his prayers will be accepted and heard by the Lord. Jesus assures us of just that! What does it feel like to know that God accepts our prayer? What is this quiet confidence like?

***Cultivate a habit of overflowing praise to God***

<sup>171</sup> *May my lips overflow with praise, for you teach me your decrees.* <sup>172</sup> *May my tongue sing of your word, for all your commands are righteous.* No matter what happens in life, it is good to give praise to the Lord. How do we change our situation when we practice habitual praise?

***Trust the timely help of the Lord***

<sup>173</sup> *May your hand be ready to help me, for I have chosen your precepts.* <sup>174</sup> *I long for your salvation, LORD, and your law gives me delight.* <sup>175</sup> *Let me live that I may praise you, and may your laws sustain me.* When our longings are strong, and we are waiting on the Lord for the fulfillment of our deep desire, how does gaining joy from God's word keep us going?

***Trust the Good Shepherd to find you!***

<sup>176</sup> *I have strayed like a lost sheep. Seek your servant, for I have not forgotten your commands.* Our ancient prayer warrior confesses how lost he has been! But he trusts that the Lord will seek him out and bring him safely home. How would you describe the sense of comfort that such hope brings? How does it encourage us to pray for those who have gone astray? Lift up a prayer just now for someone who needs Jesus to find them!

What has been most impactful for you as you have meditated on Psalm 119? Carry on as an UnCompromised disciple of Jesus!

*Shalom, Pastor Wes*

