

Your hands have made me and fashioned me;  
Give me understanding, that I may learn Your commandments.

<sup>74</sup> Those who fear You will be glad when they see me,  
Because I have hoped in Your word.

<sup>75</sup> I know, O LORD, that Your judgments *are* right,  
And *that* in faithfulness You have afflicted me.

<sup>76</sup> Let, I pray, Your merciful kindness be for my comfort,  
According to Your word to Your servant.

<sup>77</sup> Let Your tender mercies come to me, that I may live;  
For Your law *is* my delight.

<sup>78</sup> Let the proud be ashamed,  
For they treated me wrongfully with falsehood;  
*But* I will meditate on Your precepts.

<sup>79</sup> Let those who fear You turn to me,  
Those who know Your testimonies.

<sup>80</sup> Let my heart be blameless regarding Your statutes,  
That I may not be ashamed.

<sup>81</sup> My soul faints for Your salvation,  
But I hope in Your word.

<sup>82</sup> My eyes fail *from searching* Your word,  
Saying, "When will You comfort me?"

<sup>83</sup> For I have become like a wineskin in smoke,  
*Yet* I do not forget Your statutes.

<sup>84</sup> How many *are* the days of Your servant?  
When will You execute judgment on those who persecute me?

<sup>85</sup> The proud have dug pits for me,  
Which *is* not according to Your law.

<sup>86</sup> All Your commandments *are* faithful;  
They persecute me wrongfully;  
Help me!

<sup>87</sup> They almost made an end of me on earth,  
But I did not forsake Your precepts.

<sup>88</sup> Revive me according to Your lovingkindness,  
So that I may keep the testimony of Your mouth.

<sup>89</sup> Forever, O LORD,  
Your word <sup>[1]</sup>is settled in heaven.

<sup>90</sup> Your faithfulness *endures* to all generations;  
You established the earth, and it <sup>[2]</sup>abides.

<sup>91</sup> They continue this day according to Your ordinances,  
For all *are* Your servants.

<sup>92</sup> Unless Your law *had been* my delight,

I would then have perished in my affliction.

<sup>93</sup> I will never forget Your precepts,

For by them You have given me life.

<sup>94</sup> I am Yours, save me;

For I have sought Your precepts.

<sup>95</sup> The wicked wait for me to destroy me,

But I will <sup>[D]</sup>consider Your testimonies.

<sup>96</sup> I have seen the consummation of all perfection,

But Your commandment is exceedingly broad.

## **Introduction**

It is a joy to be able to continue my series in Psalm 119, which began last Autumn.

Thank you to Todd, the Church Council and to Mamiko for her translation and arranging the slides.

Wendy and myself still pray for you all and receive prayer updates from time to time.

We are now into 2022. You might have plans and expectations for this New Year.?

It is not wrong to plan ahead, but we must expect sometimes that God will change our plans for His ultimate purposes and for our good.

The Bible teaches that a man's heart plans his way, but the **Lord directs his steps**.

(Prov. 16: v. 9)

As we begin a New Year, the challenge for myself and all of you at Osaka International Church is this;

### **" Make knowing and obeying God's word the most important activity in our lives."**

In connection with this challenge, Psalm 119 : v. 73- 96 is one of the best places to encourage us to focus on this theme.

#### **First of all let us read Psalm 119: v. 73 – 96 in the N.K.J.**

##### **1. Hebrew letter - Yod – Psalm 119 : v. 73-80 – Theme is "Read the instructions"**

The writer in this section is informing us that there are a number of **ministries of God's word** to us as we read it and apply it to our lives.

###### **a) We learn about ourselves. - v. 73.**

As we read the Bible we discover that it is like a mirror.

We see ourselves in the Bible. As we read the Bible we see the real world. God does not hide from us what the world is like. We read stories of people's lives that reflect our own lives.

Many people can identify with Characters like David, Moses, and Joseph.

I have always been grateful for the life of Joseph.

**Genesis 50: v. 20** " But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good.....

There have been several times in my life when I have experienced similar things to what Joseph experienced. During these times I was very encouraged and grateful to God for allowing us into the lives of His chosen servants.

Whatever experience you go through this year, there will be a situation in the Bible that you can identify with. Therefore reading the Bible is essential.

When you purchase a new product, you usually take time to read the manufacturer's instructions. The company who make the product want you to get the best out of it, and tell your friends so they might buy one too.!!!

The Bible is the owner's manual for God's people.

It is the only book that tells us the **TRUTH** about where we came from, why we are here, and what we must do to succeed in life.

It also tells us where we are going.

God made us and He knows us better than we know ourselves.

### **Illustration.**

Sorry for that brief pause.

I am in England, and most of you watching the screen at O.I.C. today.

You might have observed that there is something different about my face.

Perhaps if I was live at O.I.C., Todd or Brad, or even Jeni might be holding up a card which says Pastor you have a dirty face. ( Hold up card now )

The rest of the congregation would be much too polite to do that.

However it would be rather distracting for all of you to observe a preacher with a very dirty face.

Eventually after me denying that I had a dirty face, Todd would probably bring up a mirror and ask me to look into the mirror. ( Look into mirror now )

Suddenly, I would receive a big shock, yes Todd is right, **I do have a dirty face.**

I would then run for the "wet-tissue", and wipe my face clean, as I am doing now.

**Without the mirror, I wouldn't have known that my face was dirty, even though it was politely pointed out to me.**

**This is a perfect illustration of what happens when we read the bible.**

When we read the Bible we see ourselves as a Holy God sees us.

If we are not reading the Bible, then we only see ourselves from our own personal point of view.

God sees all the dirt in our lives that we can't see. However as we read the Bible, it is like Holy Mirror.

### **Quote James 1: v. 22-25 in the New Living Translation.**

<sup>22</sup> But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. <sup>23</sup> For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror.

<sup>24</sup> You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. <sup>25</sup> But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.

#### b) **We become a blessing to others. ( v. 74 )**

If we read God's word, and obey it, it will bring **JOY** to our hearts.

I always remember a real story told by a Baptist Pastor, who was preaching at a Church in Exeter, Devon, England in about 1983. ( nearly 40 years ago )  
I actually met this Pastor on the first Sunday of the New Year and he was able to re-tell the story to me.  
The Baptist Pastor from Exeter was in America and he met a missionary who was put in prison in Cuba for his faith.  
There were also lots of other Cuban Christians in this prison just for admitting that they were Christian believers.  
When the missionary arrived in the very basic prison, build from mud, he had a small Bible with him.

The Missionary knew that the guards would soon find his Bible and take it from him and burn it.  
So the missionary decided to tear out most of its pages and give a few pages to each prisoner when they all met in the exercise yard.  
Everybody was told to hide the rolled up page of God's word into the wall of each of their prison cells.  
The prisoners made a small hole in the mud wall, inserted the rolled up page of God's word, the Bible, and then covered up the wall with some mud and spit from their own saliva.  
As part of their punishment the guards kept moving the Christian prisoners around to different cells. They were badly treated, tortured and were given very little food. However they maintained their **JOY and FAITH** in a remarkable way.  
The reason for this is that they were constantly reading God's word.  
When they went into a new cell, they would look out for tiny bumps of new mud and then scrape out the mud to uncover a portion of the Bible.  
By being constantly moved around from cell to cell they could have a new portion of the Bible on a regular basis.  
By reading the Bible, they received great **JOY** in their hearts.

If we want to be a blessing to others, then the ministry of God's word to our own hearts is essential. Then the JOY that we receive by reading it needs to **overflow to other people.**

Our lives should be like a swimming pool.

For a swimming pool to always contain fresh and clean water, there must be a flowing in of new water and a pushing out of the old water.

If the water only flows in, and doesn't flow out, then the water will stagnate, and get dirty, and not even be good enough to swim in.

Therefore if we want to be a blessing to others, then we need a constant flow in of God's Holy word, with the help of the Holy Spirit, but also a constant flowing out of God's word from us to others.

- c) **We receive God's best in the difficult times, through His word.**  
**( v. 75-78 & 80 )**

If we are reading God's word every day, then during our difficult times it will be an encouragement to us.

In v. 75 it says "in faithfulness you have afflicted me...."

N.L.T. says "you disciplined me because I needed it..."

If we go through difficult times, then God's word is a great comfort to us.

### **Example**

I remember in 1992, when I returned from Japan the first time that I was having a very difficult time. We were living near Edinburgh in Scotland at the time. Our home had been burgled while we were away, and some things were stolen.

Also one night while we were just getting into bed and someone threw a brick through the window.

The following Saturday I was praying with a person from the Church where we attended.

God spoke very clearly to my heart through **Psalm 31: v. 21-22. ( quote )**

Blessed *be* the LORD,

For He has shown me His marvelous kindness in a <sup>[1]</sup>strong city!

<sup>22</sup> For I said in my haste,

"I am cut off from before Your eyes";

Nevertheless You heard the voice of my supplications

When I cried out to You.

I have always marked these important incidents in my Bible, so I could recall the event and praise God for His help in my difficult time.

You should do this also, to encourage yourself.

So to summarize the first section, the ministry of God's word enables us to **learn about ourselves, be a blessing to other believers,** and to be **comforted and encouraged** during the difficult times of our lives.

## **2. Hebrew letter Kaph – v. 81-88. – Faith and Patience**

The focus on these verses are the responses that the psalmist makes while he waited for the Lord to judge his enemies.

The Psalmist was also waiting for God to deliver him from persecution and danger.

The enemies who were attacking the Psalmist were also enemies of the Lord Himself and of the land of Israel.

The Psalmist's concern was more than just personal.

Satan has been seeking to destroy the Jewish people ever since the nation grew in large numbers in Egypt. (v.87)

This enemy activity will continue until the end of the end times.

It is not just the Jewish people and God's chosen land that experience enemy activity.

It is all Christian believers who seek to follow and obey God's word.

The Christian life is always a battle ground and not a playground.

When you become a Christian, you step aboard a Battle Ship and NOT a Cruise Ship.

( Quote - John 16: v.33 in the N.K.J. )

<sup>33</sup> These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

#### **Fainting but hoping - v. 81-83.**

The writer was in a desperate state. His soul fainted. His eyes failed from searching God’s word. His body felt like a dried up wine skin.

However he also says in these verses that he never gave up hope in God’s word.

Paul in the ship wreck on his final journey to Rome, never gave up hope.

**( Quote Acts 27: v. 20-26 in the N.K.J. )**

<sup>20</sup> Now when neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest beat on us, all hope that we would be saved was finally given up.<sup>21</sup> But after long abstinence from food, then Paul stood in the midst of them and said, “Men, you should have listened to me, and not have sailed from Crete and incurred this disaster and loss.<sup>22</sup> And now I urge you to take [f]heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship.<sup>23</sup> For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve,<sup>24</sup> saying, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.’<sup>25</sup> Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me.<sup>26</sup> However, we must run aground on a certain island.”

The Psalmist never gave up, and we should follow his example.

As we look forward to 2022, there will be times of great challenge to our faith because of difficult circumstances.

However at these times we must HOPE in God, TRUST his WORD, lean on JESUS, and be comforted by His HOLY SPIRIT.

It is **always too soon to give up on God.**

#### **Questioning but waiting – v. 84-85**

**How long ?** is the question people always ask when they are suffering.

Even the Martyrs asked this question in Revelation. **( Rev. 6: v. 9-11 )**

It is difficult to wait for God to act when we are in difficult times.

James 1: v. 3-4 informs us that God is working in our waiting times.

<sup>3</sup> knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. <sup>4</sup> But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

#### **Trusting and Reviving – v. 86-88.**

Somebody once said, **“When the Lord allows His children to go through the fire furnace, He keeps an eye on the clock.”**

Robert Ketcham said this ;

**“ Your Father in Heaven loves you too much to harm you, and He is too wise to make a mistake.”**

And finally the last section.....

**3. Hebrew letter Lamedh – v. 89-96. – People and the world change, but God’s word is changeless.**

**God’s word is settled – v. 89.**

Ever since Satan asked Eve, in Gen. 3: v. 1. “ **Has God indeed said** .... The devil has been attacking the word of God.

Throughout history, the devil has attacked God’s word, through Atheists, agnostics, scientists, and even liberal ministers of the Church, but the word of God still stands.

God’s word will speak to **every generation** that will listen, **even in Japan.**

If people in Japan will listen carefully to God’s word, with an open heart, then God will speak.

In v. 152 of Psalm 119, it tells us that God’s word is **founded forever**....

And in v. 160 it says that God’s word will **endure forever.**

**God is faithful – v. 90.**

As we look forward to this New Year, be encouraged that God is **“faithful”**.

God has been faithful to me and He will be faithful to you.

**God’s creation is established. – v. 90-91**

In spite of what the world says about global warming and climate change, God will preserve His created world. God will preserve His world until He decided to create a New Heaven and a New earth.

**Quote 2 Peter 3: v. 5-7 – quote in the N.L.T**

<sup>5</sup> For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, <sup>6</sup> by which the world *that* then existed perished, being flooded with water. <sup>7</sup> But the heavens and the earth *which* are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

**God’s peace is available – v. 92-95.**

In these verses the Psalmist is declaring that without God’s word he would have perished in his affliction, but with God’s word he can have peace.

This is the same for us too.!!!!

**Finally God wants us to get out of our comfort zone this year !!!!– v. 96.**

There is lots of truth buried in the last verse which we don’t have time to unearth. However there is a challenge in this last verse.

In the N.K.J. it says that “your commandment is exceedingly broad.”

In the N.I.V. it says, “your commands are boundless...”

In the N.L.T. it says “ “ God’s commands have no limit.”

As Christian believers we often limit God to what **we can do**,

and what **we can understand**, and what **little faith that we have.**

Because of this we live in a “**Comfort Zone**” where we don’t see God working in our lives because we don’t trust Him to do anything for us, or to step out in faith and serve Him.!!!!

God is perfect, and we are not. But God can perfect the things concerning us.

**Psalm 138: v. 8 – The Lord will perfect that which concerns me.....**

**God wants to work in your life in 2022. Of that I am sure.**

However we need to realise that trusting God fully in our lives, will take us out of our comfort zone.

So we come back to the beginning of the sermon for my challenge to you all and me.!!!

**“ Make knowing and obeying God’s word, the most important activity of your life in 2022, and you never know where God will lead you.”**

At the age of 59, I was in a comfort zone, so I had a spiritual check -up.

I was determined to know and obey God’s will for the last 5 years of my full time ministry.

I didn’t expect it to come to Japan, and be the Pastor at O.I.C. but it was His will and it was the best 5 years of my ministry life.

It was not without its challenges, and Mamiko & Yuko know this well, but God was faithful to His word.

Be encouraged and move forward in faith determined to move out of your comfort zone and serve God this year.

**Amen.**