

Introduction

Good morning to everybody at O.I.C. today.
February is usually the coldest month in Japan.
I have clear memories of scrapping off the ice from the window of my car on Ikoma mountain on a cold February Sunday morning.
We started the car before breakfast so that we could leave at 7:30 a.m. in order to open up the OCC building by 8.00a.m.
We arrived early so that the worship group could practice their songs.
The hot 7/11 coffee woke us up and we had time to pray again and prepare for the service.
Both Wendy and myself have happy memories of these days.

Before we begin our studies in Psalm 119: v. 97-120, we might benefit by reminding ourselves a few things about this Psalm.

Psalm 119 is the longest Psalm in the Bible, and it describes how the word of God enables us to grow in Holiness.

It is also a Psalm that helps us in the difficult times of our lives.

If you are having a difficult time in your life right now then this Psalm will help you.

Psalm 119 is divided into sections of 8 verses.

Each section is headed up by a letter of the Hebrew Alphabet.

If we read and understood Hebrew then this Psalm would be easy to memorize.

This is clearly one of the purposes of its arrangement.

God wants us to memorize scripture.

The focus on this Psalm is for us to get to know, and appreciate, God's word.

It is also designed to help us to apply God's word to our every day lives.

If we do this well, then our lives will be richer and more blessed.

Let me first read the portion of Psalm 119 that we will study today.

Read Psalm 119: v. 97-120. In the N.K.J.

Oh, how I love Your law!

It *is* my meditation all the day.

⁹⁸ You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies;

For they *are* ever with me.

⁹⁹ I have more understanding than all my teachers,

For Your testimonies *are* my meditation.

¹⁰⁰ I understand more than the ^[a]ancients,

Because I keep Your precepts.

¹⁰¹ I have restrained my feet from every evil way,

That I may keep Your word.

¹⁰² I have not departed from Your judgments,
For You Yourself have taught me.
¹⁰³ How sweet are Your words to my taste,
Sweeter than honey to my mouth!
¹⁰⁴ Through Your precepts I get understanding;
Therefore I hate every false way.
¹⁰⁵ Your word *is* a lamp to my feet
And a light to my path.
¹⁰⁶ I have sworn and confirmed
That I will keep Your righteous judgments.
¹⁰⁷ I am afflicted very much;
Revive me, O LORD, according to Your word.
¹⁰⁸ Accept, I pray, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD,
And teach me Your judgments.
¹⁰⁹ My life *is* continually ^[u]in my hand,
Yet I do not forget Your law.
¹¹⁰ The wicked have laid a snare for me,
Yet I have not strayed from Your precepts.
¹¹¹ Your testimonies I have taken as a ^[s]heritage forever,
For they *are* the rejoicing of my heart.
¹¹² I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes
Forever, to the very end.
¹¹³ I hate the ^[t]double-minded,
But I love Your law.
¹¹⁴ You *are* my hiding place and my shield;
I hope in Your word.
¹¹⁵ Depart from me, you evildoers,
For I will keep the commandments of my God!
¹¹⁶ Uphold me according to Your word, that I may live;
And do not let me be ashamed of my hope.
¹¹⁷ ^[u]Hold me up, and I shall be safe,
And I shall observe Your statutes continually.
¹¹⁸ You reject all those who stray from Your statutes,
For their deceit *is* falsehood.
¹¹⁹ You ^[v]put away all the wicked of the earth *like* ^[w]dross;
Therefore I love Your testimonies.
¹²⁰ My flesh trembles for fear of You,
And I am afraid of Your judgments.

1. Mem – 12th letter of the Hebrew Alphabet. Theme = Deeper than Bible study.

Today there are many resources for studying the Bible.
You can access thousands of Bible commentaries, and Bible teachers from the internet.
Bible Gateway and other Apps can link you with every Bible in print, from the King James to the New Living Translation, and everything in between.

Although these resources are not wrong in themselves, we must realise that the Bible is unlike any other book.

We need to be in a personal relationship with the author of this book, if we are going to benefit from our Bible study.

It is not enough to have academic knowledge about God and the Bible.

We must know how to put that knowledge into practice.

Our relationship with God is determined by our relationship to God's will for our lives.

This is determined by how we relate to God's word, the Bible.

What we all need, including me is a heart knowledge of God's word.

A heart knowledge of God's word comes about when we are personally taught by God through His word.

The Psalmist gives us three main conditions that we need in place in our lives in order to benefit from God's word.

Verses 97-100 – we must love God's word, and meditate on it.

In these verses the Psalmist declares that through personal meditation of God word, he has become wiser than his Elders and teachers.

When we hear the English word "meditation", we often think of the Buddha Religion. In that Religion which is popular in the U.K. now, a lot of "Meditation" takes place.

However in Christianity it is a different type of meditation.

Christian meditation is "focused thinking" about a Bible verse in order to discover how I can apply its truth to my own life.

(Read Psalm 1: v. 1-3 in N.K.J.)

Blessed *is* the man
Who walks not in the counsel of the ^[a]ungodly,
Nor stands in the path of sinners,
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;
² But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he ^[b]meditates day and night.
³ He shall be like a tree
Planted by the ^[c]rivers of water,
That brings forth its fruit in its season,
Whose leaf also shall not wither;
And whatever he does shall prosper.

There is a promise of blessing with Bible meditation.

Bible meditation is the key to becoming like Jesus Christ.

Quote Romans 12: v. 2. – N.K.J.

² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

When our minds are transformed by God's word, it affects our decisions, and our life-style reflects that of Jesus Christ.

Bible Meditation is the key to answered prayer.

Quote John 15: v. 7 in N.K.J.

⁷ If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you^[b] will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

Bible meditation is the key to successful living.

Quote Joshua 1: v. 8 in the N.K.J.

⁸ This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you^[c] shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

Verses 101-102 – We must obey God's word.

We don't benefit from God's word unless we obey it.

The Bible is NOT like a supermarket, where you choose the food you like, and avoid the foods you don't like.

If the Bible tells us that something is wrong, then we stay off that evil path, as the Psalmists says in v. 101.

If the Bible tells us that something is right, we don't avoid it, we obey it.

One Christian writer said that "Obedience is the organ of spiritual knowledge" In other words, when we obey God's word, we gain greater knowledge of God and insight into His word.

Verses 103-104 – We must enjoy God's word

The sweetest thing that the Psalmist could taste would be honey.

Therefore he compares the enjoyment of reading God's word to the taste of honey.

If you know and love Jesus as your own personal saviour, then God's word tastes sweet like honey.

However if you are not a committed Christian, and NOT walking with Jesus, then God's word doesn't taste very nice.

In a good Marriage relationship, or just a close friend relationship, you always enjoy spending time with that person.

It is the same when it comes to the Bible, God's word.

You should enjoy spending time with God, because you are in a personal relationship with your creator.

This relationship has come at great cost to God, your creator.

He allowed His Son Jesus to take the punishment of our sins, in order that we might be in a right standing and relationship with Him.

Therefore you enjoy God's word much better when you are in a right relationship with Him.

2. Next Hebrew letter is Nun – v. 105 -112.

The theme in this section is “**Determine to be Faithful**”

Someone once said “**The greatest ability is dependability**”

This challenge especially applies to the Christian life.

Every Christian **wants God to be faithful to His word**, and the personal promises that He makes to His children.

Therefore it is NOT wrong for God to expect His children to be faithful to Him.

Faithfulness is an evidence of our **personal FAITH**.

But Faith comes from hearing and receiving the word of God.

(Romans 10:17, & 2 Thessalonians 2: v. 13.)

In this section the Psalmist describes several areas of faithfulness in the life of a believer.

Faithful feet – v. 105.

Two Biblical images are combined in this verse.

Life is like a “**path**”. (Psalm 119 : v. 32, 35, 101, 128, Psalm 16: v.11)

God’s word is like a “**light**” that helps us follow the right path.

(Psalm 119: v. 130, Psalm 18: v. 28, Psalm 19: v.8, Psalm 36:9, Psalm 43:3)

In the Old Testament days in which this Psalm was written, they did not have electricity, or even battery torches.

They had clay dishes containing oil and the light from that oil only illuminated the path in front of you, one step at a time.

It is very similar if you have a head torch (flash light – U.S.A.) like me.

I use it when I am walking in the country lanes near my home at night.

I can only see two meters in front of me.

When we follow God’s word, it is a bit like that. We can only take one step at a time, and we only see what is ahead of us, and not the whole route.

With God, you take steps of obedience through His word, and then this leads to the next step.

Eventually we arrive at the destination, because we have been faithful to take little steps of obedience along the way.

Obedience to God’s word, keeps us walking in the light. (1 John 1: v. 5-10)

The Bible teaches us that we live in a dark world and only the entrance of God’s word will give us light.

(John 1:5, 3:19, 8:12, 12:46, Colossians 1:13, 1 Peter 2:9)

Faithful Words – v. 106-108.

In this section the Psalmist is repeating his promise to God. He is also expecting God to restore his life and honour His word.

Making a promise to God is a very big thing to do, and we must not make promises unless we are determined to keep them.

This is true both of promises to God and to our friends.

Of course we must depend on the Holy Spirit to be able to fulfil those vows and promises to God.

(**Quote Matthew 5: v. 33-37 in N.K.J.**)

³³ “Again you have heard that it was said to those of [m]old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’
³⁴ But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne;
³⁵ nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶ Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷ But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.

(Other references are Numbers 30: v. 2, Deut. 23:21, Eccl. 5: v. 1-7)

(Example – read chapter 4 – page 33-34 of my book here)

One Bible commentator said that the highest use of speech is when we are singing our praise to God.

I am sure that we want God to accept our praise in worship. Therefore we must be sure that we are singing scripture back to God.
All good praise must be based upon the Bible, or actual Bible words if you can fit them in to a song In v. 108 the Psalmist is wanting God to accept his praise.
The Psalms are really God’s song book. God appreciates it when we are singing from His “Song Book”.

Faithful Memory – v. 109-110.

The Old Testament believer did not have a Bible like the ones we have today. He couldn’t consult the Bible whenever he wished to do so.
The Old Testament scriptures were written on large scrolls and deposited with the Priests. This meant that the people had to listen very carefully to the public reading of God’s word.
They had to remember what they heard.
Today we are very blessed with having a pocket Bible, or a Bible on our phone or tablet.
However unless we are reading it, then we will not remember it.
One of the ministries of the Holy Spirit is to bring God’s word to our remembrance, when we need it. (John 14: v. 25-26 &16: v. 12-15)
However we can’t remember what we have never learnt or heard. !!!!
In these verses, the Psalmists said he was taking risks, and so do we when we chose to follow Jesus.
However they are risks worth taking, for the Glory of God.

Faithful Heart – v. 111-112.

In the last two verses of this section, the Psalmist calls God’s word the rejoicing of his heart. In the N.L.T. it says that God’s word is his treasure and his heart’s delight.
The reason why this Psalmist was rejoicing in God’s word is that he had gone deeper into God’s word in order to find the treasure.

The surface reading of God's word is good, but you will only find the treasure, if you dig deeper into God's word.

This takes hard study and good resources can help us in your digging.

When I was only 6 years old, I was taken by my parents to the Rand Easter Show in Johannesburg South Africa. I don't remember anything about the Agricultural Show, but I do remember being taken down a Gold Mine.

Apart from touching a refined Gold Bar and not being able to lift it, my greatest experience was understanding that you have to go very deep underground in order to find Gold.

We went a very long way down in an elevator to see the area near where they were digging for Gold.

So if we want to mine Gold from God's word, then we must be prepared to dig deep and study the Bible. This study must not be done for head knowledge, but to enlarge our heart to obedience and the joy that comes from this obedience.

We now come to the final section of our message today.

3. Hebrew letter is Samekh – v. 113-120. The theme is “Dealing with the enemy”

If the Christian life only involved meditating on God's word, and loving God, then our lives would be easy.

However every true Christian has a big enemy who works through lots of little enemies who co-operate with him.

That enemy is called Satan and he will use many people to further his activity in this world.

Acts 14: v. 22 tells us that “Through many tribulations we enter the kingdom of God.” (Acts 14: v. 22 – N.K.J.)

If we look only at what the enemy is doing in our world then we will be discouraged and want to give up.

In Numbers Chapter 13: v. 27-33 we read the story of 12 spies who went secretly to Canaan to spy out the land that God had promised to give His people Israel. 10 of the spies only looked at the enemy and looked at their own ability.

They were discouraged and did not want to enter the land.

However Joshua and Caleb looked to their great God and His power and His promises, and trusted Him to use them to conquer the land.

In the end it was only Joshua and Caleb who entered the promise land.

All the other men of fighting at the time died in the wilderness over 40 years.

In this Psalm, the Psalmist gives us four assurances to help us face the enemy in our lives with courage and assurance of God's help.

v. 113 – 115 – God protects His people.

The Psalmist says in v. 113 that he hates the double minded. These were people who were not fully committed to God. Today we might call them half hearted.

In James Chapter 1: v. 8 we are told that double minded people are unstable in all their ways.

The Psalmist declares that God is his hiding place and shield.

Quote Ephesians 6: v. 16 in N.K.J.

¹⁶ above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

It is our faith in God and His word that protects us from the enemy.

In the Psalms it is clear that the Lord protects us so that He might equip us to face the enemy and fight our daily battles.

Quote Psalm 3 v. 3 in the N.K.J.

But You, O Lord, *are* a shield for me,
My glory and the One who lifts up my head.

(Others references to this same truth are contained in Psalm 27: v. 5, 28: v. 7, 31:20, 32:7, 33:20, 46: v. 1-2, 61: v. 4, 84:11, and 91: v. 11.)

It is only in God that we find the protection and help that we need to face our daily battles.

v. 116-117 – God upholds the obedient.

The Hebrew word translated in English as uphold, also means sustain.

These two words mean that as we lean on God for His support, then God will give us aid and refreshment.

When we feel like giving up, God will come to our aid in wonderful ways.
He is our loving heavenly Father.

v. 118-119 – God rejects the wicked.

Let me just read these verses in the New Living Translation.

Psalm 119:118-119

But you have rejected all who stray from your decrees.

They are only fooling themselves.

¹¹⁹ You skim off the wicked of the earth like scum;
no wonder I love to obey your laws!

Today it is not popular anywhere in the world to challenge people about their moral behaviour.

The concept of a Holy creator God who hates sin and must punish sin is not allowed to be spoken about in public life in many western so called Christian nations.

People want to live their lives without any concern for their behaviour.

The LGBT movement is so powerful today that it is in many areas silencing the truth about God and promoting the lies of our enemy Satan.

It is a conflict between TRUTH and LIES.

God's TRUTH will win in the end, but God will judge all those people who reject Him.

God in His judgement purifies His children, that is all those who profess faith in Jesus as their Saviour and Lord.

But God will skim off the wicked of the earth like SCUM.

The thoughts and the plans of the wicked are based upon lies.

The Psalmist says that they are only deceiving themselves.
If you know the truth, and are following Jesus today, you are very privileged.

v. 120 – God alone must be feared.

The Psalmist closes with a healthy fear of God.
The fear of God, is a fear that conquers all of our personal fears.

Quote Psalm 118: v. 6 in the N.K.J.

The LORD *is* on my side;
I will not fear.
What can man do to me?
God honours those who fear Him. (Psalm 15: v. 4)

As we live our lives in obedience to God, showing our faith in Him and His word, respecting his power, holiness and majesty, then we are assured of His protection.

May God help us in the future to practically apply the teaching of His word.

Amen.