

IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH

LESSON: ARE YOU SITTING DOWN FOR THIS?

PSALMS 119:33-36

1/3/20

MAIN POINT

Develop a posture towards God's word. Come to God's Word with a heart ready to learn and obey.

CONTEXT

Psalms 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible totaling 179 verses. Of all the things that the longest chapter in the Bible could be about, the Psalmist gives his attention to the goodness of *God's Word*. All verses in Psalms 119 are about God's word. The Psalmist identifies God's word with terms like *commands, precepts, laws, testimonies, statutes, and rules*. In Psalm 119, we are told to delight, learn, keep, fix our eyes, praise, learn, guard, seek, store, declare, mediate, cling, and understand God's word. The overall emphasis of the Psalm is that we find life when we abide in His word.

Psalms 119 is also an acrostic in the Hebrew alphabet. If one were to follow along in their Bible, he or she would see groupings of eight verses under each Hebrew letter. Under each Hebrew letter, each verse begins with that same letter.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

If you want to know something that the Bible says about a certain topic, how do you go about finding the answer? Which of the following do you do: ask a pastor, google it, do a personal study, turn to a particular website or resource, or something else?

Do you feel like you can arrive with a good answer on your own?

Imagine it is your first day of class. You enter the classroom and one of the first things you do is look for a place to sit. In our culture, class settings are typically where a teacher stands in front and the class sits to listen. Sitting is a posture to learn.

Our text this morning emphasizes that God's Word is vital for life, joy, and being in relationship with God. There is no substitute for God's word in the life of a believer. Apart from it, we drift way from God—his joy, his heart, and purpose for our lives. The challenge this morning is, do you regularly posture yourself to sit and learn from God's word?

EXPLANATION //

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PSALM 119:33-36

How would you describe the Psalmist's words in these verses: a prayer or a praise?

**Identify and list the specific requests that the Psalmist makes in these verses?
(Teach me, give me understanding, lead me, incline my heart)**

TEACH ME

The Psalmist prays, "Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes and I will keep it to the end." Very simply, we ask God to teach us *so that we might obey them*. For many of us, especially those who have been Christians for many years, there is a temptation to learn God's word for intellectual fascination more than for obedience. The temptation is real because there are so many fascinating things in God's word from fulfillment of prophesy, parallel passages, Old Testament typology, word studies, and other things. Scripture itself proclaims there is "full understanding and knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3). Certainly, there is so much to know and treasure in God's word. We praise God for this! However, we must remember to learn *and do*. James 1:20 affirms, "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." If we fail to obey, we deceive ourselves.

On a scale from 1-10, how prone are you to learn for intellectual reasons alone?

GIVE ME UNDERSTANDING

The Psalmist makes a similar request in verse 34 that he makes in verse 33. He asks that he has understanding so he can keep His law. What is added in verse 34 is the Psalmist's desire to observe it *with his whole heart*. Not only are we to learn God's ways so we might obey, but the Psalmist expresses his desire to obey *from the heart*.

There is an abundance of heartfelt affection in not only understanding God's word, but in obedience to it. We may be tempted to forget this. We have a tendency to think God's commands are burdensome—there to take away our fun or rob us from the world's pleasures. Perhaps the Psalmist knew this tendency, so he prays that he has understanding to obey from his heart. He prays that he sees the goodness and joy in God's ways. John 15:9-11 says, "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. *If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love*, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and *that your joy may be full.*"

Have you ever had a time when you had great affection for God's word that you woke up ready to read it?

Have you ever had seasons when you struggled to find the affection to read it? If so, did you read anyway? Did you find a fresh way to approach Scripture? Did you stop reading or take a break?

LEAD ME

The Psalmist now prays that God would "lead me in the paths of your commandments for I delight in it." One thing to resolve about this verse is to determine the antecedent for the pronoun 'it.' Does 'it' refer to the path or commandments. Does the Psalmist want to delight in God's commandments, or does he want to delight in the path?

While it is certainly true that the both are worthy of our delight, verse 34 probably intends for us to delight in the path. This means that the Psalmist here is praying he takes delight

specifically in obedience. He is praying he delights in the actual acting out of the commandments. He delights in the journey that results from obeying God's word.

Have you ever been hesitant to obey, but obeyed anyway? Did you experience delight afterwards?

We can be honest. Have you ever regretted obeying God? (My guess is that the majority of us rarely, if ever, have had feelings of regret for having obeyed God. But if someone has regretted, we might ask, why do they think that is?)

INCLINE MY HEART

Lastly, the Psalmist says, "Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain." The Psalmist seems aware that apart from Scripture's influence upon us, we are prone towards selfishness. This is interesting! Perhaps the chief way we can fight against selfishness is to read our Bibles.

Particularly, the Psalmist prays against selfish *gain*. Selfish gain has the idea of discontentment where someone craves and wants more and more. Inclining one's heart to His word brings humility and contentment. Often discontentment comes when we mediate on *others*. We see someone else has a bigger house, nicer car, better job, or better looking family. By meditating on someone else we grow discontent with the things God has given us. In solution, rather than meditate on others, we should meditate on God's word—the source of truth with power to bring our hearts contentment.

Think for a moment. Does discontentment pull you away from regularly reading God's word?

APPLICATION //

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

With the start of a new year, now is a great time to start a Bible reading plan. Who in the group has done a reading plan before? What was it like? When did it get tough? What did you do when you "hit a wall" or miss some days?

Do you typically pray for God to help you read His word before you start to read? Or do you just pour the coffee and start reading? Would you consider committing for a week to pray Psalm 119:33-36 each time you open your Bible to read? What difference do you think it would make?

PRAYER

Close in prayer, asking God to press this truth that was studied.