

LESSON 1 . . . Three Keys to a Happy Life (119:1-8)



NOTES

We are beginning an amazing “Journey” through Psalm 119. The sub-title for this study is *Delighting in God’s Word*. This psalm is a powerful kaleidoscope, looking at the importance of the Bible from every imaginable perspective. It is a unique, special chapter of the Bible in many ways. Here are some amazing facts about Psalm 119:

- It is the longest chapter in the Bible. (176 verses)
- It has 171 verses that directly mention God’s Word.
- It contains more words than 30 entire books of the Bible.
- It is an acrostic poem of the Hebrew alphabet.
- Its singular focus is to express the foundational importance of God’s Word in every part of life.

During the Protestant Reformation, the battle cry of the Reformers was *sola Scriptura*—Latin for “Scripture only.” This phrase declared the absolute, exclusive authority of Scripture—above church traditions, councils, or any human opinion. The reformers correctly believed every teaching and practice in the church and Christian life must conform to Scripture alone.

In 2 Timothy 3:16, Paul writes that *all Scripture* is inspired by God and is *profitable* for teaching, correcting, and righteous training. Then, according to the next verse, what is the ultimate goal of studying *Scripture* (3:17)?

Psalm 119 is arranged into twenty-two stanzas of eight verses; each stanza is headed by the next successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. For example: above verse one is the word ALEPH (Ah’-lef), above verse nine is the word BETH, and above verse seventeen is the word GIMEL (Gē’-mel). All the Hebrew letters with their English names in the margin are listed in the right margin.

It is like someone asked the psalmist: “What does God’s Word mean to you?” And the psalmist replies, “Let me count the ways with a song using eight verses for every letter in the alphabet!”

In the first section of eight verses, we can find **three keys to a happy life**.



Key #1: Purity (119:1-4)

This psalm begins: *Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD!* (119:1). The Hebrew word translated *blessed*

א	Aleph
ב	Beth
ג	Gimel
ד	Daleth
ה	He
ו	Waw
ז	Zayin
ח	Heth
ט	Teth
י	Yodh
כ	Kaph
ל	Lamedh
מ	Mem
נ	Nun
ס	Samekh
ע	Ayin
פ	Pe
צ	Tsadeh
ק	Qoph
ר	Resh
שׁ שׂ	Sin / Shin
ת	Taw

means “happy.” The word *blameless*, or “undefiled,” refers to a person of integrity. The psalmist begins by saying that blessedness is found in pure living. What does Jesus say about having a pure heart in Matthew 5:8a?

We find **purity** by walking *in the law of the LORD*. This means our lives become pure as we hear God’s Word and strive to walk in its teachings.

The psalmist continues in verse two: *Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart*. This phrase reminds us of the beautiful promise found in Jeremiah 29:13. Write that promise below:

Lost people seek happiness in earthly things and relationships. They look for meaning through an education, a spouse, a successful career, social approval, etc. They think when they acquire these things, their hunger for happiness will be satisfied. However, they are looking for satisfaction in empty places. Happiness is found by seeking God—we hear His Word and *keep his testimonies* with all our hearts.

Blessed, or happy, people *also do no wrong* (119:3a). How do we learn to *do no wrong*? *We walk in his ways* (119:3b). The Bible teaches our blessedness is connected to our obedience of God’s ways. Since our obedience is imperfect, our happiness is also imperfect. As we become more disciplined in godly obedience, we grow in personal happiness.

That is why the psalmist says God wants His *precepts to be kept diligently* (119:4). The word translated *precepts* means mandates, or commandments, given as rules of action. *Precepts* are truth statements about what is right and wrong.

Isaiah provides a detailed method for learning God’s precepts. What does he write in Isaiah 28:10?

We learn God’s *precepts* just as we learn anything else—lesson by lesson, little by little. While our family lived abroad, we home-schooled our children. We started teaching kindergarten mathematics with 1+1 and 2+2. Next, we added subtraction, multiplication, and division to their foundation of

understanding. As the kids approached high school, their understanding was beyond what my wife and I could teach, so we enrolled them in a public high school. Little by little, their knowledge of mathematical principles grows deeper and deeper.

God designed our minds to understand spiritual truth in a similar way. He does not “download” complete understanding into our brains when we are saved. Instead, He teaches us precept by precept as we study the Bible and obey in faith. Little by little, our knowledge of spiritual principles grows in purity and power.

The first key to a happy life is **purity**, which comes from learning and living according to the Bible. Next is . . .



Key #2: Prayer (119:5-6)

Beginning in verse four, the psalmist moves from preaching **about** God to praying **to** God. The psalmist has just written that God’s Word is to be *kept diligently*, or completely obeyed. None of us can do that. Therefore, what does he pray (119:5)?

This is an honest, heartfelt prayer for help in obeying the Bible. As the man said to Jesus in Mark 9:24: *“I believe; help my unbelief!”* The psalmist desires to live righteously, but he knows his own tendency to sin.

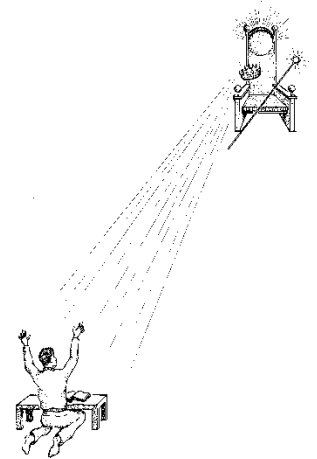
He continues: *Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments* (119:6). As Christians, we acknowledge we fall short of God’s perfect standard. But, as we trust and obey God’s Word, we grow in holiness—a process called “sanctification.” Then, when faced with opposition, we can find comfort in such verses as Proverbs 15:29. Write it below:

There is a third key to a happy life, as we see in the final verses. . .



Key #3: Praise (119:7-8)

There is a rule in geometry—the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. Likewise, the shortest distance from problems to praise is prayer. The psalmist makes this connection: *I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn your righteous rules* (119:7).



As we apply God's *rules* to our problems, we experience the benefits of godly living. Our prayers of supplication are then transformed into prayers of praise. How does David express this truth in Psalm 103:2

There are many reasons for giving praise to God, but the primary reason is because He is good and the Source of every good thing.

In verse seven, we also discover what must be true in our lives before God will receive our praise. We must have *an upright heart* (119:7a), which means being honest before God. An honest heart stimulates *praise*.

Praise is one of the keys to a happy life because praising God puts our problems into perspective. *Praise* also reminds us God has a divine purpose for every problem He allows in our lives.

The prophet Micah asks what he should bring to the Lord when he bows before Him. Should he come *with burnt offerings, with calves a year old*? (Micah 6:6). Would the Lord will be pleased with thousands of rams, or with 10,000 rivers of oil, or even with the sacrifice of his firstborn child (6:7)? After all these suggestions, Micah tells us what the Lord requires of us when we come before Him. Write Micah 6:8c-e below:



This describes *an uprightness of heart* that leads to *praise*.

The psalmist finally declares: *I will keep your statutes* (119:8a). However, we must remember we cannot fully obey God's *statutes*, or decrees, unless He enables us to do so. That's why the psalmist adds the last phrase: *do not utterly forsake me!* (119:8b). He foresaw the truth of what Jesus would later say: *for apart from me you can do nothing* (Jn 15:5e).

God wants us to be happy; that's why He gave us this psalm that reveals **three** keys to a happy life are: **purity**, **prayer**, and **praise**.