October 25. 2026

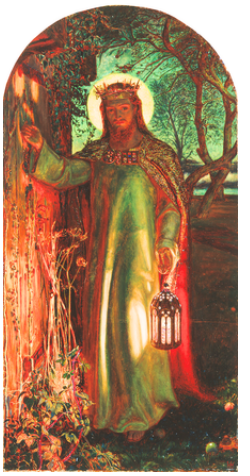
Psalm 119:33-40

[33] Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes; and I will keep it to the end. [34] Give me
understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart. [35] Lead me in
the path of your commandments, for I delight in it. [36] Incline my heart to your testimonies,
and not to selfish gain! [37] Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life
in your ways. [38] Confirm to your servant your promise, that you may be feared. [39] Turn away
the reproach that I dread, for your rules are good. [40] Behold, I long for your precepts; in
your righteousness give me life!

Scriptures for further study:
Jeremiah 31:33

Psalm 119:9-11

"He that shall read it considerately, it will either warm him or shame him."
-Matthew Henry



The Life-Giving Word
Psalm 119:33-40

BIG IDEA: Because God's Word gives life, let us ask Him to turn our hearts from worthless things and reorient us around His ways.

OUTLINE

- God's Ways
- Our Sin
- God's Work

DISCIPLESHIP DURING THE WEEK

These "Sermon Discussion Questions" are designed for study during the week for believers in a wide variety of ages & stages in their walk with Christ.

1. What are one or two of the things that you or your family treasure?

2. From the sermon in reference to Psalm 119:33–35: "God's Word is not merely a set of principles to know, but a way of life to follow. It is not merely information for the mind; it is a path for the heart." The psalmist is teaching us that God's Word gives us a road to walk. Imagine that a friend who has read these verses asks you what they look like in the life of a Christian. How would you answer?

3. In verses 36 and 37, David writes, "Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain! Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life in your ways." In Genesis 3, Eve saw that the fruit was "a delight to the eyes." It looked good and promised wisdom, satisfaction, and life. What are some of the worthless things in your life that seemed desirable or full of promise but, in reality, were worse than worthless? How could David's prayer be yours this week?

4. Think about verses 38–40. David says, "Confirm to your servant your promise, that you may be feared." Jeremiah 31:33 shows how God confirms His promise to His people: "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts." What evidence of God's grace do you see in these verses?

5. Psalm 119:9–11 is a grace-empowered prescription for guarding our lives according to God's Word. From the sermon, we learn that storing God's Word in our hearts looks like memorizing God's Word, meditating on God's Word, and praying God's Word. Which has helped you the most? In which area would you take steps to grow?

6. David asks God to turn away the reproach he dreads and to give him life. David's hope in the Messiah has been fulfilled in David's Son, Jesus, who walked in God's ways perfectly and bore our reproach on the cross. In light of His work on your behalf, how can you remain on God's path this week?

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

This psalm celebrates the gift of God's Torah, or covenant instruction, as the perfect guide for life. It belongs to Psalm 19 and the wisdom psalms (Pss. 1, 112) but is far more elaborate: the longest psalm, the longest chapter in the Bible, and the most carefully structured. It follows a strict acrostic pattern: 22 stanzas of eight verses each, one for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet, with every verse in a stanza beginning with that stanza's letter. Its goal is to enable God's people to admire His Word so strongly that they will work and pray hard to have it shape their character and conduct.

— Adapted from the ESV Study Bible

Psalm 119 was written in an alien world. The prevailing mood was religious skepticism, ranging from the "double-minded" (v. 113) to "the wicked" who "lie in wait to destroy me" (v. 95). The psalmist faced derision, slander, and intrigue from those in authority (vv. 22–23, 69, 85). He seems to have been young (vv. 9, 99–100), sensitive to scorn ("the reproach that I dread," v. 39), and low-spirited in his isolation. Yet all of this tightens rather than weakens his grip on God's Word. He is humble, aware of his own temptations to worldliness (vv. 36–37), and confesses that he has "gone astray like a lost sheep" (v. 176). His sufferings are far outweighed by the "great spoil" (v. 162) he has found in God's Word.

-Adapted from Derek Kidner

Praise to Jesus – Lord, we praise You because You teach us the way of Your statutes. You give us understanding so that we can keep Your law and observe it with our whole hearts. The path of Your commandments is our delight; we are not left to ourselves to figure out how to live. We praise You, Lord, because You incline our hearts to Your testimonies so that we might not give our eyes to worthless things or selfish gain. Thank You, Father, for writing Your law on our hearts, and for sending Your Son, Jesus, to bear our reproach on the cross, so that we find purpose and direction for our lives in Your ways. Indeed, Lord, we long for Your precepts, for in Your righteousness You give us life!

Repent through Jesus –Holy Spirit, we ask You to lead us in a time of confession. Father, we confess that You teach us Your way, yet we insist on our own way. You give us understanding, yet we settle for knowing without living. You make Your path our delight, still we try to figure out life on our own. You incline our hearts to Your testimonies, but we give our eyes to worthless things and chase selfish gain. You write Your law on our hearts, but we leave Your Word unread. Christ bore our reproach, but we look for life elsewhere. Forgive us our sins and lead us back to Your way.

Consecration for Jesus –God's Word does not merely inform us; it gives life. It teaches us God's ways, exposes our sin, turns our hearts, redirects our eyes, confirms God's promises, and gives us life in His righteousness. And God has given us this life in Jesus Christ, who perfectly walked in God's ways, never turned aside to selfish gain, never fixed His eyes on worthless things, bore our reproach at the cross, and rose again to give life to all who belong to Him. Because God's Word gives life, let us ask Him to turn our hearts from worthless things and reorient us around His ways.

FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

These questions are written to aid parents in leading family devotions with their children.

1. How would you describe the Word of God? What are some of your favorite parts of God's Word? (Psalm 119 is the longest Psalm and the longest chapter in the Bible. This psalm is all about God's Word and the importance of it in our faith journey. We are only studying verses 33-40 as a glimpse into this Psalm.)

2. In verses 33-34, what reason does the psalmist give for his plea for God's help? (The psalmist wants God's help so that he can live by God's way and not his own way.)

3. What does it mean to delight in God's Word? (In verse 35, the psalmist mentions that he delights in God's Word. To delight is more than simply liking God's Word. This means that there is a deep affection or love for God's Word. This delight and affection can only come from God.)

4. What does "heart" mean in verse 36? (The Biblical term heart does not refer to the physical heart that pumps blood in our bodies. This term is the part of us that makes decisions about what to do or not do.)

5. What did the psalmist say that he wanted God to help him turn away from and turn towards in this psalm? (The psalmist asked for God's help to turn away from "worthless things" and to turn to God and His Word.)

6. Pray together, thanking God for His Word and asking for God to help you to delight in and love God's Word in order that you would follow God's ways in your lives.

Scriptures for further study:
Hebrews 1:1-2

2 Timothy 3:14-17

James 1:22-25

Ephesians 2:1-10

Ephesians 4:22-24

John 15:5

Scriptures for further study:
2 Timothy 3:14-17

James 1:22-25

Hebrews 4:12

Jeremiah 31:33

John 15:5

Ephesians 4:22-24

FOR STUDENTS

1. The psalmist is not asking God to give him rules to follow; he is asking God to teach him a way of life, to give him understanding, and to make the path of God's commands his delight. What is the difference between knowing about God's Word and actually walking in it? Where is the gap for you right now between what you know and how you are actually living?

2. The psalmist prays, turn my heart away from selfish gain, turn my eyes from worthless things. He does not say he will try harder; he asks God to do the turning. Think about a specific worthless thing that has had more of your eyes and heart than it deserves lately. What made it look appealing? What has it actually produced in you? What would it look like to pray these two verses honestly this week?

3. Derek Kidner describes the psalmist as young, sensitive to scorn, and low-spirited in isolation, and says all of that tightened rather than weakened his grip on God's Word. When life is hard, what does your grip on Scripture tend to do - tighten or loosen? What does the psalmist's example say to you about that?

4. The psalmist asks God to confirm his promise so that he might fear God, to turn away the reproach he dreads, and to revive him in God's righteousness. All three requests lean entirely on what God will do, not on what the psalmist will produce. Where in your own walk with God are you most tempted to rely on your own effort rather than asking God to do the work in you?

5. Jesus perfectly walked in God's ways, never turned aside to selfish gain, never fixed his eyes on worthless things, bore our reproach at the cross, and rose to give life to all who belong to him. He did everything the psalmist is asking God to help him do - and he did it in our place. How does that change what it means for you to pray verses 36-37 this week? And how does it change what you are resting on when you fall short?

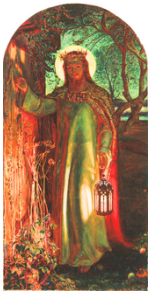
FOR NON-BELIEVERS OR NEW BELIEVERS

1. Oftentimes, we (falsely) believe that all Old Testament believers approached God's Law as if it were an entirely burdensome weight to carry and obey.
Question: How does Psalm 119 provide a healthy corrective to this notion?

2. As a new believer, it is critically important that you learn to develop the discipline of Bible intake. Psalm 119 helps us to see the various ways we should discipline ourselves to interact with Scripture. These include: hearing, reading, studying, memorizing, meditating, praying through, and applying/obeying the Bible. Look for specific verses that refer to these disciplines.
Question: Which of these disciplines come more naturally for you? Which are most difficult? Why is it good to practice these disciplines alone but also in the company of others?

3. Psalm 119:11 says, "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."
Friendly challenge: As a new believer, consider the following challenge—pick just one verse from Psalm 119 and commit it to memory.

The Blessed Life: A Study of the Psalms



"The Light of the World" (1851-156) by William Holman Hunt

Psalms Introduction

The Book of Psalms is the sacred place where the living God meets His people in the most intimate and personal of ways. He invites them to know Him not merely as an idea, but as their refuge, portion, shepherd, and King. From the opening doorway of blessedness in Psalm 1 to the climactic Hallelujahs of Psalm 150, the Psalter reveals that the truly happy life is one rooted in the person and work of Almighty God, whose steadfast love holds His people through every season of the soul.

As the Psalter moves from anguish to adoration, from darkness to dawn, it becomes a mirror of the Christian life itself. It teaches us to pray honestly, to hope stubbornly, and to sing faithfully, even when night seems long. In the deepest valleys, the Psalms give voice to the church's groan; on the highest heights, they train the church's doxology. And in every line, every cry, and every hallelujah, Christ Himself comes near, revealing the light of the world in the dark night of the soul and leading His people into the blessedness that only His grace can give.

– Pastor Bill

About the artwork and artist.

The Light of the World, 1851-1853, is an iconic allegorical painting by William Holman Hunt.

The painting depicts Jesus Christ as a regal figure in flowing robes, wearing a crown of thorns, holding a glowing lantern, and preparing to knock on a weed-overgrown wooden door with no external handle. This illustrates Revelation 3:20 from the Bible: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him..." The artist William Holman Hunt is showing us that Jesus is the divine door to the living God who meets His people in the most intimate and personal ways. The closed, overgrown door → representing the human soul or "obstinately shut mind" that has long ignored spiritual calling. There is no handle on the outside → the door can only be opened from within, emphasizing free will and personal invitation to faith. The lantern → Christ as the light of the world (John 8:12), illuminating darkness and offering salvation. The work marked Hunt's deepening Christian faith (from earlier agnosticism) and became one of the most reproduced and devotional images of the Victorian era, inspiring oratorios. hymns, and widespread popular piety. It's often called a visual sermon on personal salvation.