

## LESSON 1½: PSALM 119

This psalm is an acrostic poem of twenty-two stanzas. An acrostic is a composition in which sets of letters, typically the initial letter of the lines, taken in order form a word or phrase or a regular sequence of letters of the alphabet. Tradition says that King David wrote this to teach his sons the Hebrew alphabet at the same time teaching them to love the Torah: God's word to man. If you look at this psalm in your King James Bible, you will see how it is divided into sections, each one labeled with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In Hebrew each verse within a section begins with the same Hebrew letter.

1. From the first section, name as many synonyms as you can find for the words of the Lord.

2. What reason is given in v. 4 for keeping the commandments?

3. What is one way that we can praise God according to verse 7?

READ: Section 2 (BETH)

4. a. What can the word of God do for a young person?

b. How can you encourage the children and young people in your sphere of influence to spend time regularly with the word of God?

5. Verses 10 & 11 contain the recognition that we are prone to “wander” because of the pull of our fallen nature. What things in the 8 verses of Section 2 will strengthen us in our personal struggle for righteousness?

READ: Section 3 (GIMEL)

6. The first 2 verses of this section, 17 & 18, contain a prayer to the Lord. What is prayed for?

7. What are ways that the commandments can be hidden from a person?

READ: Section 4 (DALETH)

8. a) What “bargain” or agreement does the psalmist make in verse 27?

b) PERSONAL: If you have ever made a personal, private covenant with the Lord, how has it been a blessing to you?

9. What verse from this section appeals particularly to you and why?

10. CHALLENGE QUESTION: Verse 32 is interesting because it includes a metaphor that modern science has verified in the physical world. "Running," consistently and regularly, does "enlarge," or build the physical organ—the heart. Can you think of ways in which this happens also in the spiritual world?

READ: Section 5 (HE)

11. In verses 33 and 34, there are 2 conditions spoken of that must be part of our relationship to God's word. What are they?

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12. What are two attitudes spoken of in this section that pull us away from "the way of the Lord"?

READ: Section 6 (VAU)

13. In verse 41 the psalmist prays for mercy "according to thy word." Rewrite this prayer in your own words? (See Isaiah 1:18. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." See also Exodus 34:6-8; Lev. 19:22; Nehemiah 9:17; Ezekiel 18:21-22; and many others under *forgiveness* in the T.G.)

14. What actions flow in the life of an LDS woman if she "trusts in the Lord"?

15. THOUGHT QUESTION: Verse 42 speaks of "him that reproacheth me," i.e., someone who points out our faults. This could be an enemy or Satan himself, whose name in Hebrew means The Accuser. What would be your defense, based on God's word, against such an enemy? (I'm assuming you can't use the "I have no faults" defense. ☺)

16. How do we "walk at liberty" (v 45) because we "seek [God's] precepts"?

READ: Section 7 (ZAIN)

17. PERSONAL: Can you share a time when God's word has been a "comfort in [your] affliction"?

18. Notice the psalmist's use of the word "night" in verse 55. What is different about nighttime in today's world from the world of the psalmist?

b. Does our modern world tend to make us less dependent on God do you think?

READ: Section 8 ( CHETH)

19. What are some ways that we “delay to keep the commandments”? Or, said another way, what things do we let “delay” us?

Read: Section 9 (TETH)

20. The psalmist says in verse 67 that “before [he] was afflicted [he] went astray,” and again in v 71, “it is good for me that I have been afflicted.” How can afflictions serve to get us on the good path to God?

Read: Section 10 (JOD)

21. Verse 75 speaks of judgments (*punishments* in scripture language) that are right, that come from God. Tradition has it that this psalm was written by David, a man who suffered many things from the hand of God on account of his serious sin of adultery and having Bathsheba's husband killed to hide his sin. These judgments (punishments) came, David says, by virtue of God's *faithfulness* to His own word.(v75) Is it comforting or frightening to know that God must administer his word, the good and the bad consequences of it, with perfect consistency and impartiality?

22. This section speaks of “those that fear thee.” In what way are we supposed to fear God?

23. How is it that God, who is perfectly just and administers judgments for sin *faithfully* and *according to His word*, so that mankind rightfully fears the results of disobeying such a just God, can also bestow undeserved *tender mercies* upon those who delight His law? (Hint: in this question is the very heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ.)

24. PERSONAL: Sometimes we receive an undeserved and tender gift from God that outsiders would regard as a coincidence. But we know that God has worked in our life. Would you like to share a time that God has blessed you with an unlooked for “tender mercy” that you knew was from the Lord to you?

Read: Section 11 (CAPH)

25. Verse 88 uses the word, *quicken*. The King James English meaning of this word is “to bring to life.” How does the word of God quicken us, or give us life?

b. What kind of life do we get from God's word?

Read: Section 12 (LAMED)

26. The psalmist cries out: “I am thine, save me!” Read D&C 45:3-5. How do our covenants with Christ save us?

27. What do you think it means that God's word is "forever settled in heaven"?

READ: Section 13 (MEM)

28. Verses 97 and 104 express the idea that wisdom and understanding come from a thorough familiarity with the Word of God. Contrast that with what today's world admires as sources of wisdom and understanding.

29. Verse 103 is the source of a Jewish custom of touching a child's tongue with honey before teaching them from the scriptures so that they will come to love studying them. How can we create good associations for our children with scripture study so that they will love God's word and not dread it?

READ: Section 14 (NUN)

30. How does God's word serve as "a lamp unto [our] feet and a light unto [our] path? (What a beautiful verse!)

31. Is there someone in your family tree that took "the testimonies [of God] " as their "heritage forever" and passed that heritage on to you?

b. How can you do this for those who come after you?

READ: Section 15 (SAMECH)

32. Verse 114 contains the phrase "thou art my hiding place." How can the Lord hide us and from what? (Note: This verse is the source of the title for Corrie Ten Boom's great Christian classic, The Hiding Place, the story of her life in a concentration camp in WWII for helping Jews escape the Nazis. )

33. Verse 120 is another on the theme of "fear of the Lord.". How does this verse help us see what it is about God that we should fear?

b. What happens to people when they lose this kind of fear of the Lord?

READ: SECTION 16 (AIN)

34. What verse speaks to you from this section and why?

READ: Section 17 (PE)

35. As we study the scriptures, we want them to become "wonderful" to us also. What blessings fade from our lives as we cease studying the scriptures on a regular basis?

36. What do you think verse 136 is referring to?

READ: Section 18 ((TZADDI)

37. Tell about a verse in this section that particularly speaks to you.

READ: Section 19 (KOPH)

38. Verses 147 and 148 contain the archaic word "prevent" which means "come before." When we understand this word's meaning, we see that verse 147 refers to getting up before dawn to cry unto the Lord. Verse 148 refers to meditating on God's word late at night. How do these verses then, show a person seeking God "with my whole heart?"

39. Jeremiah 29:13 says, "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." What is one thing you can do to increase your "wholeheartedness" before the Lord?

Read: Section 20 (RESH)

40. Verse 154 asks God to "plead my cause." Look at D&C 45:3-5 again. Who is it that is pleading our cause?

b. To whom is he pleading for us?

c. Upon what basis does He ask mercy for us? Cite the phrases from D&C 45 that show this.

41. What can you find in verses 159 and 160 that have something to say about the character of God?

Read: Section 21 (SCHIN)

42. What emotions does the psalmist have toward the word of God? Cite particular phrases.

43. What remarkable promise is found in this section?

Read: Section 22: (TAU)

44. If we are all "lost sheep" as verse 176 says, what comfort do we find in that same verse?

45. What is something you have learned from this study that you think will stay with you and help you?