

The Word of God Guides Us

Psalm 119:105

This summer Robyn and David hope to take a backpacking trip around Isle Royal. To aid them, we bought a topographical map. Maps are an important tool for ensuring you travel the correct route to reach your destination. This map also shows the contour of the land so they will know if they are going uphill or downhill. It shows information centers, ranger stations, campground locations, trails, restaurants, showers (that's important), lodging, lighthouses, lookout towers, shipwrecks, swamps, woods, mines and other points of interest.

It will be an invaluable tool for them to navigate the path of their journey. Gone are the days when a map of Michigan was a standard feature in the car glovebox. We no longer need a book of maps if we are traveling to other states. All we need to do now is enter in an address in our phone or other GPS device and it guides us on our route, telling us when to turn, reminding us of the posted speed limit, informing us of an accident or speed trap and even rerouting us if there is construction ahead.

We use directional maps all day without even thinking about it, no matter where we go. These maps tell us when and where to stop. When to go. Which lane we need to be in to turn left or right. They tell us how fast to go or inform us of construction. They warn us of dangers like limited site driveways or sharp turns. Other guidelines mark out lanes we can drive in and lanes we aren't to cross like a double yellow line.

Approach a public building like Meijers or Wal-Mart and they direct us to which door we should use to enter and after having made our purchase it will tell us which door to exit. They are maps used to help guide us. Some hospitals use colored markings on the floor or wall as a guide.

We need these navigational tools or visible maps because otherwise it would be easy to get turned around creating confusion and chaos.

Robyn read a story not ago about a woman who had

retired. She and a friend decided to go backpacking to celebrate. Somewhere along the journey the friend became ill or injured and needed to return. She encouraged the newly retired friend to go back with her, but she wanted to push on. At one point she lost the trail and got turned around. Her husband became concerned when she missed a checkpoint and opportunity to contact the family. Days passed into weeks and no word. Rescue teams were sent out to try and locate her. About two years later, they found her body in her tent having succumbed to either the elements or lack of nutrition.

The world is filled with all kinds of obstacles and danger that need to be navigated through or around. Without a map to guide us, we can easily get turned around. Such a map has been given to us so that at the end of the journey, we can hear those words of affirmation **“well done, good and faithful servant.”** Or to be like Paul who indicated at the end of his life that he had finished his race and kept the faith (**II Timothy 4:7**).

If we want to finish well and reach the destination laid out for us, then we must follow the map that has been given to us. Our passage in **Psalm 119:105** tells us what that map is.

“Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

Here's another of my Howieisms *“God's Word guides our steps and guards our path.”*

Many of us have attempted to try and find something in the dark. We have gone into a dark room because we think we know right where an item is that we are looking for only to realize that it's not where we thought it was. So we have to turn on the light to find it. Others have tried to navigate around the furniture in the middle of the night only to find it with our toes. We think we know right where the furniture is that we need to avoid only to discover someone must have moved it between the time we went to bed and when we got up to get a glass of water. Had we flipped on the light we would have known the path to take without the painful reminder.

How much time are you spending looking at the map that gives you direction for your life? Are you using the light it gives to guide your journey in life or are you trusting your memory or best guess to hope it's the right action or attitude to take?

In our series on the importance of the Word of God I want us to discover that the Word of God is to direct us.

I. THE WORD OF GOD IS TO DIRECT US – Psalm 119:105

Now, I am a proud card-carrying member of the male species which entitles me to all the rights and privileges afforded said group. It says right in the membership manual that I get a by on asking directions. It is, after all, a given sixth sense built into our DNA to know how to get wherever it is we are going. So, we don't or won't ask directions for fear of seeming to be directionally inept. Maps are inconvenient and cumbersome. Whether pride or ignorance or both, some of us at times can be directionally challenged and we only admit that to ourselves although our wife may know it but choose to remain silent and keep the peace.

And therein is the experience of many Christians. They refer to the map God has given all too infrequently peeking at it once a week thinking they have the directions in their head only to find that they missed an important turn somewhere along the way and are afraid to stop and ask directions.

So as I think about **Psalm 119:105** the first thing I see is that God's Word points to our obedience.

A. God's Word Points to Our Obedience

When we babysit for Thomas and Ryah, she has written out instructions to follow.

When the kids eat.

What they eat.

When Shep gets a bottle.

When he goes to bed.

When Phoebe goes to bed.

What they are to wear to bed.

Reading a story with Phoebe.

Praying with Phoebe.

Having Phoebe pray.

Affirming her prayer.

Turning on the sound machines for both rooms.

Turning out the lights.

We try to obey the instructions.

God has given us a guide to follow to obey Him 1) so we honor Him, and 2) so it goes well with us.

The book of Joshua tells us about the conquest of the land God had promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; land that would be given to their descendants. Joshua was told that if they obeyed all the commands of God they would experience success in their conquest. But we don't go too far into the book to see that they weren't 100% faithful. After defeating Jericho, there is a little snag taking Ai. Achan chose to disobey God's mandate that everything in Jericho was to either be destroyed or dedicated to God. He stole some gold and clothes and then hid them. Because of his disobedience, Israel was beaten when they went up to Ai. After confession and judgment, they defeated Ai.

Shortly after that a rag tag group of men showed up in the camp of Israel wanting to make a treaty with Joshua. They give the impression that they had travelled a great distance to make a treaty with the Israelites. Their bread was moldy. Their wineskins were old, cracked and empty. Their clothes and sandals were worn out. Israelite leadership questioned the travelers about where they came from. They were told it was from a distant land. They had heard about the fame of the Lord their God, how He had delivered them from Egypt and the Amorites and wanted to make a treaty with them. Israelite leadership suspiciously wondered if they might be living in the land that was set to be conquered. But the travelers reassured them they had come from a far-off place. After further examination, we read in **Joshua 9:14** "**The men of Israel sampled their provisions BUT DID NOT INQUIRE OF THE LORD.**" (Emphasis added) Let that sink in a moment. They failed to go to the map to get directions. They didn't inquire of the Lord. How will you know the right road to take if you don't get directions by going to the map.

How easy it would have been for them to huddle together for a quick meeting and ask the Lord, but they were confident in themselves in their own sense of direction and wound up making a treaty with the Gibeonites who in fact were within the land that was to be conquered.

Folks, how easy it is for us to do the same thing. We think we know the way God wants us to go so we move forward without asking Him, without going to His guidebook, His map for directions and we end up making the wrong decision.

Let **Psalm 40:8** be your guide when obeying the Word of God. **“I delight to do Your will, O my God: yes, Your law is within my heart.”**

Obey God’s will. Be doers of the Word and not hearers only, otherwise we deceive ourselves.

In **I Samuel 15** we have the story of Saul being told to go and destroy the Amalekites. God was using Israel to mete out His wrath on this people for their rebellion and rejection of Him. They were blatant idolaters. Saul and the army had been dispatched to destroy them. But Saul deviated from the plan. He disobeyed and spared the king and the best of the animals. Let’s pick up the story in **I Samuel 15**.
I Samuel 15:12-23a

God wants an obedient heart. He wants us to follow the map He has given us to point the way on the actions and attitudes that please Him.

Warren Wiersbe writes **“Each act of obedience shows us the next step, and eventually we arrive at the appointed destination.”**

The psalmist gives us an image to picture how the Word guides us. He says that God’s Word is a lamp and a light guiding us day and night. We all know that in ancient times they didn’t have lighted roads. There were no motion sensors that turn on outdoor lights when someone approaches. They didn’t have flashlights that illumine dark places a hundred yards away. They carried a small clay bowl that was filled with oil. The sides were pinched at one end to allow a wick to be inserted. People didn’t venture out at night for fear of danger from wild animals lurking

about, falling into some ditch or pit or bandits.

These lamps were intended to be used for short distances, usually around the outside of the home. The light from the lamp literally provided only enough light to see one step at a time, meaning that walking was slow and deliberate to ensure safety.

As a light and a lamp, God’s Word is to be obeyed with careful and deliberate steps. Following it one step at a time ensures we are following the map as it is laid out for us. His Word gives us enough light to take one step at a time. This verse shows us how God’s Word gives us light for daily living.

What do you need guidance for?

Where do you need direction?

Marriage? It’s in there.

“Husbands, love your wives.”

“Wives, submit to your husbands.”

“Submit to one another.”

Finances? It’s in there.

“Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.”

“A fool and his money are soon parted.”

Raising children? It’s in there.

“These commandments that I give today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children.”

“Father’s, don’t exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction in the Lord.”

Relationships within the family, neighbors, enemies, peers at work, your boss? It’s in there.

“Love one another.” “Obey your earthly masters.”

Eternal life? It’s in there.

“Believe on Christ and you will not perish but have everlasting life.”

Temptation? It’s in there.

“When you are tempted, God will provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”

How to have joy in trials? Again, it’s in there.

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds.”

All you need to do is pick up God's map and it will light your way, point you in the direction to follow.

Just as God is the great I AM, sufficient for all we need, so His Word is likewise the I AM, the all sufficient source to guide you through what you need for the Christian life. Because God's Word is truth, it will never lead you astray.

Are you letting it be your guide or are you seeking other sources, inferior sources, confusing sources?

Let me remind you that the happy man is the one who doesn't stroll after the counsel of the ungodly or stand in agreement with sinners or sit with mockers. He finds His counsel and delight in God's Word as he meditates on it and does it. From it, He seeks light to guide his steps and guard his path.

God's Word points to our obedience. **"It is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path."**

Are you letting it light your path so that you walk with godly character?

God's Word also points to our obstacles.

B. God's Word Points to Our Obstacles

Years ago I was traveling late at night to visit my folks. If you have ever driven that long stretch on M-72 from Rose City to Mio you know that there's not much there but farm land and forests. On this particular night I was the only vehicle out on the road. I thought it would be interesting to turn my headlights off as I drove. I'm not sure how far I had driven before I realized that was a dumb thing to do. First, it was dumb because I didn't want to get pulled over by the sheriff and have to explain myself, and two, there are lots of deer that cross the road, even though they don't cross where the signs are posted for them. I would have never seen them, so I turned my headlights back on.

God's Word is a light that points out obstacles in our path, actions and places that we should avoid, attitudes and motives that should not be evident in the life of an obedient Christian.

Ephesians 4:25-5:21

II Timothy 3:16 tells us that all of God's Word is

beneficial for our instruction. Let me remind you what Warren Wiersbe said about the profitability of the Bible. He says that Scripture teaches us **"what is right, what is not right, how to get right, and how to stay right."** It points out the obstacles and how to avoid them.

If we aren't referring to the map of God's Word, we won't be able to discern if an obstacle is something we should avoid.

Keep this in mind from the words of Charles Spurgeon: **"We are walkers through the city of this world, and we are often called to go out into its darkness; let us never venture there without the light-giving Word, lest we slip with our faith."**

Our feet will not slip, if we are walking by the light of God's Word. **Verse 106 "I have taken an oath and confirmed it, that I will follow Your righteous laws."**

The psalmist had taken a vow, made a commitment to follow God's Word because it was right, true, just, perfect. His Word would never lead him astray, never cause him to take a misstep if he was faithful to follow its directions. Whatever path opened up before him, he was determined to follow God's Word. We can expect the same if we choose to obey it carefully and avoid the obstacles it points out. It will be our light by day and our lamp by night. **Ronald Reagan once observed about the Bible, that "within the covers of the Bible are all the answers to all the problems that face us today."**

To avoid life's obstacles that the devil would put in our path to trip us up, are you letting it light your way so that you walk with godly character?

Proverbs 3:5-6 is a good reminder that when we trust God with our whole heart, He will direct our paths. His Word will light our way. The psalmist understands that this is a habitual daily pursuit of obeying God's Word by following it.

Let me point out from **vv. 111-112** the delight that the psalmist finds in God's Word, the reason he chooses to follow it.

“Your statutes are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart. My heart is set on keeping Your decrees to the very end.”

No compromise.

No hesitation.

No deviation.

No complaining.

It was his joy to follow it to the very end.

Let God’s Word direct you. Let it be **“a lamp to your feet and a light to your path.”**

So how do we let the Word of God direct us?

We find the answer in **Colossians 3:16** where we see that the Word of God is to dwell in us.

II. THE WORD OF GOD IS TO DWELL IN US – Colossians 3:16

To **“dwell”** means to abide, live in, to inhabit, to remain. In other words, The Bible is to be studied, meditated on, and applied in such a way that it becomes a permanent part of the believer’s life. The word **“richly”** means abundantly and gives the idea that we let the Word of God overflow us, to be abundant in our daily lives.

When God’s Word has such a commanding presence in our lives, the natural outflow isn’t just in a changed character as we yield to the work of God’s Spirit who has taken His Word and made an effectual change in us, it also results in a joyful spirit as we daily and naturally sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude. We will have happy hearts when God’s Word is at home in us and infused within us.

Let me encourage you when you have your daily devotions to also incorporate a hymnal. There is rich doctrinal truth in many hymns that help to reinforce the Word of God in your life. A heart that has God’s Word at home will be a rejoicing heart.

Let me also encourage you to memorize God’s Word as a way of letting it richly live in you.

John Piper writes **“Nothing can replace Bible memory in forging a connection between the Bible, our minds, and our hearts.”**

Here are four ways to approach God’s Word so that it directs your steps and richly dwells in you.

A. Approach God’s Word Honorably

By that I mean we should come to it in awe because it is the very words of a loving, sovereign, all-powerful, all-knowing God. He desires for us to know Him through this Word He has given us. Because He is holy, His Word is holy as well. Treat it as you would treat God – with the same reverence and respect both deserve.

God’s Word isn’t just another book to throw on the coffee table or leave laying around. Sometimes I’ll be driving somewhere and I’ll see a car with a Bible stuck on the back ledge. Did you know Muslims will not let the Koran touch the floor and that when carrying it with other books, it is always on the top?

Let’s approach God’s Word honorably.

Second, approach God’s Word humbly.

B. Approach God’s Word Humbly

A humble heart is a teachable heart. Recognize that there are lots of things that we need to learn from it. Humility puts the Word and will of God above our own. It seeks to please God and live according to His commands. Because we are teachable, we want His Word to show us where we need to change and then allow His Spirit to bring about that change.

Along with approaching God’s Word humbly so that we can let it teach us is the idea that we need to approach it honestly.

C. Approach God’s Word Honestly

Hebrews 4:12-13 “For the Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account.”

We may fool others, but we will never fool God or

His Word. It has penetrating power that reaches into the very depths of our spirit and judges the thoughts and motives of the heart. Change will only occur when we are honest with ourselves about what it says we need to do to grow in our walk with Christ.

Walvoord and Zuck state that **“In doing this, it is able to discriminate between what is spiritual in man and what is merely ‘soulish’ or natural.”** So when Scripture points something out to us, we need to listen up and straighten up because it reveals the real motives behind our thoughts and actions. We may think our actions or attitudes are spiritual when in fact allowing God’s Word to richly dwell in us, reveals our true motives. If we want to see real spiritual growth, come to it humbly and honestly.

It is taking the prayer of David in **Psalm 139:23-24** and changing it to say **“Let Your Word, O Lord, search my heart. Show me if there is any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.”**

If you don’t want to know what’s in your heart, then by all means, avoid God’s Word. But if you are serious about letting God’s Word dwell in you richly so that it becomes your lamp and light to direct your steps as a believer, then you must approach it with humility and with honesty.

The fourth idea is to approach God’s Word hungrily.

D. Approach God’s Word Hungrily

Jeremiah 15:16 **“Thy words were found and I did eat them and they were unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart, for I am called by Your name, O Lord God Almighty.”**

In **Job 23:12-13**, Job states that God’s Word was more important to him than his daily bread.

Again, in **Psalm 119:111** the psalmist said that God’s Word was the joy of his heart.

Hunger by hearing it, by reading it, by studying it, by meditating on it, by memorizing it. Fill your hunger by spending time with others who hunger after it as you study together. Where possible, study with others.

One of the points from our video this past Wednesday was to study God’s Word in community. Don’t just gather to hear it preached on Sunday, gather others times to discuss it together.

What does it say?

What does it mean?

What does it mean to me?

Let me encourage you to come earlier on Sunday if you aren’t already to Adult Impact. There is great discussion around the text being preached in the message.

Let me encourage you to come out Wednesday for Pathway to Power. We pray and study together.

Men, we meet the third Saturday at 8 a.m. for study and donuts. It’s a great time of fellowship and study as we encourage and challenge each other.

If those times are not convenient, let me encourage you to join with others on another night of the week to study a topic or a book. Start one yourself. Meet in person or learn Zoom or Skype.

Proverbs 27:17 **“As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.”**

Let the old Lay’s commercial be your desire as you hunger after God’s Word where you can’t eat just one. I encourage you to purchase some good study tools like a concordance, a Bible dictionary, and a topical Bible. Pastor Jim and I would be glad to point you to some good resources.

We don’t have to stumble through life. God’s Word is a great map if we let it be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. If we let it dwell in us, it will direct us along the right road so that we reach our destination safely.