

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Psalm 119:129-136

LEADER'S STUDY

The Wonderful Word

Psalm 119:129-136

What is happening?

To say something is “wonderful” means it fills you with wonder, and that’s the way the psalmist describes God’s word in the first verse in this passage. Psalm 119 itself is a wonderful “acrostic” poem, meaning each stanza begins with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet (the first stanza begins with *aleph*, the second with *beth*, etc.). That is, not just the first line, but each individual verse in each stanza begins with the same letter. Each stanza has eight verses. Multiply that by the 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet, and you have 176 intricately-crafted verses, all singing one song: praise for the word of God. The psalm refers to the scriptures using various terms, such as law, testimonies, commandments, statutes, precepts, word, and judgments.

In the stanza we’re looking at this week, the psalmist speaks of the wonder of how God’s word gradually unfolds and gives light and understanding. It is a prayer to experience more of God through immersion in the scriptures. The psalmist laments that much of the world doesn’t know God or revere His word—and this brings deep grief to both mankind and to God Himself. But at the same time, the psalmist says God’s face shines upon those who do study and follow His statutes.

Where is the gospel?

John 1 tells us that Jesus is the Word of God made flesh. Everything God said and did in the Jewish scriptures is fleshed out in Jesus’ life. Everything God promised in the scripture is fulfilled in Christ. One might say the gospel is the perfect, sinless Word of God taking the scripture-prescribed penalty for sin upon himself, so that sinful people might be able to receive the new life the word promises. God’s desire to redeem the lost is seen throughout these verses, but redemption can only come from the word itself—not from mankind’s wisdom, good intentions, religious works, or good deeds.

As you prepare for this week, ask yourself questions like these: Do I see God’s word as wonderful? Do I see God graciously unfolding his ways to me through the scriptures? Do I look to His truth for help when I’m feeling oppressed? How is God calling me to depend on Him more? How is God calling me to respond based on this scripture?

Spend some time reading and meditating on these truths as you prepare for your meeting. Be willing to share this with your group and invite them to join you in sharing how God is asking them to respond to His word. Be willing to share areas that He is calling you to “follow Him” and make clear “I” statements about how you are going to align with Him.

Some helpful scriptures: Psalm 12:6; 19:7-13; 81:10; 119; Matt. 9:36-38; Luke 19:41-44; John 1:1, 14-18; 17:17; 2 Peter 1:3-4, 19-21.

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INTENTIONAL BIBLE READING

READ Psalm 119:129-136
and meditate on it.

Read in the ESV or similar word-for-word translation. Read it again in the NLT to get a thought-for-thought perspective.

We don't know who wrote Psalm 119. Many think it was David, who wrote many of the psalms—including a few other acrostic ones, such as Psalm 25, 34, 37, and 145. But there are other acrostic poems in the scriptures attributed to other writers (e.g., Proverbs 31:10-31, and each chapter in Lamentations). Bottom line: If it were important for us to know who wrote it, God would have told us, as He does in many other psalms.

Though we can't know the psalmist's name, these verses tell us a great deal about the writer's character. How would you describe the person who wrote this?

Read the entirety of Psalm 119. Why might it have been written in the acrostic style?

Many Bible versions head each stanza of Psalm 119 with the Hebrew letter with which each verse begins by writing out the word (e.g., *aleph*); by showing the character (e.g., *א*); or both (*aleph א*). Unfortunately, the psalm must be read in Hebrew to see the acrostic aspect; it doesn't carry over in translation.

Try to summarize vv. 129-136 in your own words. What is its theme?

POTENTIAL STUDY QUESTIONS

These are just questions you might ask to help your group discussion. Don't feel like you need to answer all of these as a group.

How does the 2nd half of v. 129 logically follow the 1st half? (That is, what is the “therefore” there for?)

What does v. 130 suggest about understanding the scriptures?

What is the relationship between longing for God's commandments (v. 131) and loving His name (v. 132)?

In v. 133, how does God's word prevent sin from getting dominion over a believer?

In v. 134, does the psalmist pray for redemption from man's oppression so he can be free to do his own thing, or for some other reason?

Does v. 135 suggest that it is a grace from God to be able to learn His statutes?

What moves the psalmist to tears in v. 136? Why does this affect him so?

What seems to be the main point of this passage?

What do you learn about God from this passage?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Does God's word fill you with wonder? Why or why not?

Do you ever feel frustrated that you can't understand the Bible better? What is the solution to that?

Does the psalmist consider it his own responsibility to “keep his steps steady” in the word (v. 133)? Or does he ask God to keep him stable? What's the difference?

What is your response to seeing the world reject God's truth? Are you angry with the ignorant and deluded, or grieved for them?

With whom are you going to share what you have learned?

(This is a critical part of growth that is often overlooked. If we can share it with someone else it means we really understand it, it cements it in our own minds, it makes us accountable to the truth and it blesses the one who hears it. Rom. 10:17)

Based on this passage, what can we pray about and how should we pray?