SHOW ME THE WAY!
PSALM 119:105-112
SERMON

Human beings need direction. The Lord gives us clear directions for living in His holy Word. Following God’s Word helps us find our way in life! God has given us His Word, the Bible, which supplies direction for living our lives. It functions like a GPS, telling us how to get to our destination. It tells us where to go, which turns to take to get to our destination. When we make a wrong turn it corrects us and re-directs us back to the correct path. So, we could call the Bible a SPS, a spiritual positioning system! The Bible helps us get positioned spiritually!!

Do you strive to live your life following the direction and counsel of God’s Word? Do you let its teachings shape your decisions, values, relationships, attitudes and speech? God help us grow in our knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and live according to His directions!

Last week I preached from Hebrews, chapter four. We studied Hebrews 4:12 and learned that God’s Word can live within us! God’s word can be alive and active in us, it can penetrate our deepest thoughts and ambitions and reveal and judge our sin. I challenged you last week to let God’s Word live within you and truly shape your thoughts, attitudes, decisions, plans, relationships, etc.

Today we consider eight verses in Psalm 119. Psalm 119 carries the distinction of being the longest psalm in the book of Psalms. The author wrote the psalm as an acrostic poem. Perhaps your Bible separates the eight line strophes which distinguish this psalm. The Hebrew alphabet includes 22 letters and every one of these eight line strophes begins with the next respective Hebrew letter. Thus, with 22 eight line strophes we have 176 verses.

In the passage we’re studying this morning, the Hebrew letter in the acrostic is the letter “nun”, somewhat similar to our letter “n”. So, every single word that begins a new verse in this section begins with the letter ‘nun”. Why did the author write the psalm this way? He used a poetic device to stimulate the reader’s interest in the poem. Dr. Leslie Allen in his commentary on the Psalms describes Psalm 119 as “a medley of praise, prayer and wisdom features”. (Allen, Leslie Word Biblical Commentary, Vol.21,pg.140)

Note the way the psalmist speaks to God directly. He speaks to God in the second person. What does he tell God? He tells God that following his word helps him find his way in life. Following God’s Word helps us find our way in life! Following God’s Word helps us live life according to God’s plan for our lives!

In order to follow God’s Word, we must know what it says! Navy scuba divers must occasionally dive in very deep waters. In such deep waters it’s easy for them to become disoriented and confused. One Navy diver explained that when that happens, when he cannot see his hands or know which way is up, he simply feels the bubbles. The bubbles always drift to the surface and they help provide a means of orientation.
Sometimes we get disoriented in life. Perhaps something traumatic has happened; we got fired from our job, or a loved one dies unexpectedly or a good friend moves away suddenly or rejects us. We find ourselves drifting aimlessly, confused about which way to go. I remember during my first year of seminary the pastor of my home church had a nervous breakdown and it really shocked me! I couldn’t study or function well for several weeks. But God’s Word helped me find my way! Following God’s Word helps us live lives according to God’s plan for our lives! This brings us to:

1. **Following God’s word shows us how to live life according to God’s plan.**

   Vs.105  The original word for “word” refers to God’s covenant will for his people. It’s a larger concept than simply the Ten Commandments or the Jewish Law. This original word for “word” appears 453 times in the Old Testament. The word appears again in vs.107. The psalmist resolves to follow God’s word, his covenant will, whatever the risk because he knows of its intrinsic value as a moral and spiritual guide for life. He describes God’s word, his covenant will as a “lamp” and “light”. **In other words, God’s word shows us which road to take, it lights our path!! God’s Word makes God’s way known to me!**

Many years ago I climbed Mt. Shasta with Wes Hartman and another guy. We camped at Helen’s Lake and started our ascent at 3am, when it was dark except for the bright stars. We used lamps on our helmets to help light the way up the mountain. There was no path and it would have been really dangerous if we didn’t have the head lamps because they truly helped light the way up the steep slopes. God’s Word functions this way in our lives! Dangers lurk before us but God’s Word shows us the way to go.

We live in a very complex and confusing time. Our world has blurred the clear distinction between right and wrong. Many people today do not believe in absolute truth. How did we arrive at this moral abyss? The late Allan Bloom, who served as a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Chicago, wrote a best seller in 1987 entitled, *The Closing of the American Mind.* Bloom laid the blame for our moral abyss on Nietzsche and other existentialist philosophers who have influenced many academicians. Bloom finds the most significant sign of this fact in the way the language of “values” has replaced the language of “right” and “wrong”. We choose values because we want them but we must reckon with facts whether we like them or not!

This lack of belief in absolute truth plays havoc on our morals as a society. For instance, the number of “unmarried couple households” in our country increased 88% between 1990 and 2007. I did some checking on the number of weddings in which I have officiated in the past. Listen to this: from 1980 through 1989 I officiated at 83 weddings but from 2005 through this year, 2016, in the same amount of time, I have officiated at only 25 weddings! Many people simply live together.

When the late Chuck Colson visited Buckingham Palace back in 1997, Prince Philip asked him this question: “what can we do about crime in England?” Colson replied “send more children to Sunday School”. Prince Philip thought Colson was joking. But Colson pointed out a study by sociologist Christie Davies which found that in the first half of the 1800’s British society was marked by high levels of crime and violence which dropped dramatically by the late 1800’s and early 1900’s. What changed? Throughout that period, attendance at Sunday Schools rose
steadily until by 1888, a full 75% of children in England were enrolled. Since then, attendance has fallen off to one-third its peak level with a corresponding increase in crime and disorder. Sunday Schools reinforce Biblical teaching about godly behavior and the difference between right and wrong.

We live in a time of moral darkness and uncertainty. Let us look to God’s Word to be the lamp unto our feet and the light to our path! God’s Word clearly delineates right from wrong behaviors.

2. **Following God’s Word preserves our lives and beckons us to higher ground.**

   **vs.107**-The author speaks of his own suffering, that he has suffered a lot. He pleads with God to preserve his life! He does not tell us the nature of his sufferings, only the vast extent of them: he writes, “I have suffered much.” He pleads with God to preserve his life, “according to your word”.

Have you suffered much in your life? Some of you have. Some of you who have suffered a lot have shared how God’s Word has ministered to you during your struggles and ordeals. You have recalled certain passages or events in the life of our Lord which have encouraged and helped you. **God’s word has preserved you**! If you suffer today, ask God to preserve you, according to his word. James tells us: **“Consider it pure joy, my brothers whenever you face trials of many kinds because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. (James 1:2-4)**

When we endure sufferings and remain true and faithful to the Lord, He can use our sufferings for His glory and the growth of His kingdom. Observing what some of you have endured and the way it has sharpened your faith has encouraged me greatly in my own faith journey.

God’s word preserves our lives but it also beckons us to higher ground. By this I mean we can avoid wallowing in self-pity due to our sufferings or live according to the world’s dictates. God’s Word beckons us to higher ground!

**vs.108**-The “willing praise of my mouth” can also be translated the “freewill offerings”. The psalmist asks God to teach him his laws.

**Vs.109** This phrase “constantly take my life in my hands” means “the readiness to put one’s life in danger of one’s own accord”. In 1st Samuel 19, Jonathan has a conversation with his father King Saul in which he defends his friend David. You might remember that King Saul felt threatened by David. In this conversation, Jonathan reminds his father how David in fighting Goliath, “took his life in his own hands”. In other words, David risked his life when he confronted Goliath! David had a strong faith in God that beckoned him to higher ground and that meant fighting a giant!

**Vs.110**- Though the wicked seek to bind and constrain him, he has not “strayed from your precepts”. He remains faithful to the Lord as God has beckoned him to higher ground.
Following God’s Word helps preserve our lives! It can help keep our faith strong in the midst of adversity. Following God’s Word beckons us to higher ground. We can live lives on a totally different level than the world would expect us to live.

3. Following God’s Word fills us with joy and determination to live a godly life.
Vs, 111-The word for “statute” means something prescribed, an enactment. The psalmist comments that God’s statutes, his enactments define his heritage. By this he means he has received God’s statutes from his predecessors. Apparently, generations of his family have faithfully followed God’s word. The next phrase “they are the joy of my heart” appears as a causal clause in the original text. In other words, God’s statutes have been part of his family, his heritage because they are the “joy of my heart”. Following God’s word stimulates joy in our hearts! It also helps us learn the secret of contentment in all things.

Alice Gray in her wonderful book Stories for the Heart includes this story by Ruth Senter. Ruth Senter is a Bible teacher, conference leader and author of many books.

I heard the voice but couldn’t see the person. She was on the other side of the locker, just coming in from her early morning swim. Her voice sounded like the morning itself-bright, cheerful, full of life. At 6:15am in the morning it would catch anyone’s attention. I heard its affirming tone. “Delores, I really appreciated the book you picked up for me last week. I know the library was out of your way. I haven’t been able to put the book down. Solzhenitsyn is a great writer. I’m glad you suggested him to me. “Good morning, Pat,” she greeted another swimmer. “Have you ever seen such a gorgeous day! I spied a pair of meadowlarks as I walked over this morning. Makes you glad you’re alive, doesn’t it?

The voice was too good to be true. Who can be that thankful at this time of the morning? Her voice had a note of refinement to it. Probably some rich woman who has nothing to do all day but sip tea on her veranda and read Solzhenitsyn. I suppose I could be cheerful at 6am if I could swim and read my way through the day. Probably even owns a cabin in the north woods.

I rounded the corner toward the showers and came face to face with the youthful voice. Her yellow housekeeping uniform hung crisp and neat on her fiftyish frame. It was a uniform I’d seen before-along with mops, brooms, dust cloths and buckets. An employee of the facility at which I swam. She flashed a smile my way, picked up her plastic Kmart shopping bag and hurried out the door, spreading “have a glorious day” benedictions as she went.

I still had the yellow uniform on my mind as I swam my laps and sank down among the foamy lather of the whirlpool. My two companions were deep in conversation. At least one of them was. His tired, sad voice told tragic woes of arthritic knees, a heart aneurysm, sleepless nights and pain filled days. Nothing was good or right. The water was too hot, the whirlpool jets weren’t strong enough for his stiff knees and his doctors had been much too slow in diagnosing his case. With his diamond-studded hand, he wiped the white suds out of his face. He looked ancient, but I suspect he too was fiftyish.
The yellow uniform and the diamond studded ring stood out in striking, silent contrast, proof to me again that when God says, “Godliness with great contentment is great gain” He really means it. This morning I saw contentment and discontent. I resolved never to forget.

Following God’s word stimulates joy and contentment in our hearts! In what way or ways do you need to follow and obey God’s statutes today? Perhaps God has placed someone in your life who has not yet professed faith in Christ: a colleague at work, a classmate, someone on your sports team. You sense God leading you to share your faith with that person. Well do it! You could be the one God wants to use to draw that person into the kingdom of God! Follow and obey God’s leading! When you share and that person comes to faith, what joy you will have!

Vs. 112-Note the incredible determination of the psalmist. He refuses to let anything deter him. He will remain faithful to God and his word to the end! He wants to finish well! Do you live with this same kind of determination and passion to be faithful to God no matter what?

Following God’s Word helps us find our way in life. God’s Word shows us the correct path to follow. God’s word functions like a GPS. It provides the right direction, the turns we must take in order to get us to our final destination of heaven. It’s one thing to know which way to go and another thing to actually obey and follow the correct route! God’s word shows us how to live our lives; it preserves our lives and beckons us to higher ground. God’s word fills us with joy and determination for life. I pray that you would seek to know God’s Word, and to put your head knowledge into practice by obeying His Word. Let us pray.