

# PSALM 119

SESSION 2:

PSALM 119:17-32

Quick Start



## READ

Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.



## PRINT

Before meeting, make enough copies of this session's handout for your entire group. The handouts came with your download.



## WATCH

Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

*Note: For more detailed information, please see the How to Use The Leader's Guide document.*

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## OPEN

**When was the last time you had great expectations about something that ended up letting you down?** (new job, meeting someone you looked up to for the first time, a relationship, etc.)

**What was the first sign that it would not measure up to your expectations? How did that make you feel?**

We've all found ourselves in situations that started out hopeful and have come to leave us feeling disappointed and in need of rejuvenation. In today's session, David finds himself in a similar circumstance.

## READ

Read Psalm 119:17—32.

## WATCH

**Show Session 2:** 119:17—32 (12 minutes)

## DISCUSS

This section of Psalm 119 begins with great expectations. Someone read verse 17.

**What does David expect from God?** (That He would deal bountifully with him)

**How do you feel about this request? Do you ask and expect from God the same benevolence? Why or why not?**

As Matt explained, we have a tendency to view this kind of rhetoric as the "prosperity gospel," which basically holds that God will give us perfect health and sufficient wealth at all times through faith in Jesus Christ. Put simply, it's the belief that everything will go our way if we give our lives to Jesus.

**What are some of the ways you have witnessed the prosperity gospel?**

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**What's wrong with the prosperity gospel? In what ways does it miss the point of the gospel of Jesus?**

We could touch on a number of different ways in which the prosperity gospel perverts the gospel of Jesus Christ, but the main one is that it makes the Christian life focused primarily on self rather than Christ. It makes us primary rather than God and His glory. Yet, God tells us to pursue Him with the expectation of receiving His benevolence. Someone read Matthew 7:7–11.

**How does this passage describe the heart of God?** (He is a generous Father, even more so than the most generous earthly father.)

**How should this passage inform our expectations in prayer?** (We should go to God believing in His goodness and with expectation similar to David.)

## Go Deeper

*Learn more about the generosity of God from the following passages:*

Matt. 7:7–11; Eph. 1:3–4 James 1:17; 4:2–3

**What do these passages teach us about God's desire for His children?** (He desires to give us good gifts and through Christ has blessed us with every spiritual blessing.)

**According to James 1:17, where do all good gifts come from?**

**According to James 4:3, why does God sometimes say “no” to our prayers for blessing?**

**How do these passages create a biblical understanding of God's blessing in contrast to the prosperity gospel?**

They teach us that God is a generous Father who delights in blessing His children with gifts. Though, sometimes we ask for His gifts from a selfish heart or we ask for what is actually destructive to us. Because God loves His children, He is faithful to deny such requests for the sake of our health.

**What distinction does Matt make between the prosperity gospel and a biblical view of God's generosity?**

According to the prosperity gospel, believing in Jesus means that God will give us all that we desire—health, wealth, and a comfortable life. A biblical view of God's generosity is that God will always give us what is good, even in the times when we fail to see His gifts for what they are. When we come to Him prayerfully with this kind of faith, we can ask for Him to deal “bountifully” with us and trust that His response will be good and generous no matter how we interpret His generosity.

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So this passage starts with a sense of expectation on the part of David, but quickly devolves into what Matt called “the first-fruits of uh-oh.” Someone read verses 18–24.

**What are some words you would use to characterize David’s tone in these verses?**

As Matt explained, they give us insight into the tension we all feel between following God’s Word and experiencing fallen humanity. Like David, we all find ourselves in circumstances where we ask, “Where is God in the middle of this?”

**How have you experienced that tension between following God’s Word and dealing with a sinful world in your own life? What did your prayer life look like during those times?**

**As you reflect on those times, how did God respond to your circumstances? What have you learned about Him as a result of going through them?**

Matt referred to these kinds of difficult times as the “fertile ground of revival.” When we face deep pain in our lives, we are far more open to God’s transforming work of breathing new life into us. If we are to experience the grace of God, we first have to recognize our need for it.

**How does Matt describe the theme of verses 25–32?** (They explain how David entered into the comfort of God’s presence and power.)

Someone read verse 26.

**What action does David say he took in response to his circumstances?** (Full confession)

**How does God respond to him as a result?**

Like Matt said, many times we are tempted to project an outward strength to cover up the secret sin and pain that we experience on the inside. The reality is that Scripture has already made known to us our need for a Savior. Even more, nothing is hidden from God.

**How have you practiced confession in your own life?**

**What were the practical effects you experienced after confessing sin? How did it influence your relationship with Christ? What about your witness to others?**

**In what ways do you practice confession today? What could you do to grow in that discipline in the days ahead?**

We are all in need. The cross of Jesus Christ makes that abundantly clear. But His resurrection also provides us the hope of a new life, which is why confession is such an important part of our walk with Christ. It is an act of faith because it acknowledges that God knows our sin and that He has extended forgiveness through Jesus Christ. As we walk in this discipline, we grow in our confidence with Him. Someone read verses 27–32.

**What is the consistent theme Matt points out about these verses?** (They communicate a desire for *believing* as opposed to simply *knowing* God’s Word.)

**What is the difference between belief and knowledge?** (As Matt said, “To believe something is to be transformed by it.” Knowledge does not necessarily lead to transformation.)

**Where are some areas in your life where you need God to move you from knowledge to belief?**

It sounds counter-intuitive, but God is faithful to bring us to our wit’s end so that we might recognize our need for Him, confess the ways in which we have failed to believe that truth, and believe in Him all the more. The result of this, according to verse 32, is a deeper desire to follow His Word as He enlarges our hearts to do so.

#### DUST OFF THE HEBREW

In the original Hebrew, the phrase translated “when you enlarge my heart” literally means, “for you make wide my heart.” Throughout the Old Testament, the word for “heart” (*lev*) generally refers to more than the organ, but the seat of a person’s will and emotions. The verb *rachav* (“to make wide, extensive”) creates the image of God liberating a captive heart and releasing it to joy, confidence, and insight to walk in obedience to His Word. Verse 32 is constructed in a cause and effect structure, the first line describing the effect and the second line denoting the cause. This “widening” is a gift from God and one that creates a willing obedience rather than a begrudging submission to His ways.

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**What obstacles stand in the way of you confessing your sin?** (Fear, pride, bitterness, etc.)

**How do they keep you from the comfort of God's presence and power?**

**How would your life look different if you were to act on the truth you've learned today?**

## LAST WORD

God is sovereign to use the challenging circumstances of our lives to draw us into confession of sin and to redirect us from whatever would distract our attention from Him. His Word is living, active, and written on our hearts through the Holy Spirit who lives within us.

So wherever you find yourself in need of rejuvenation today, confess that. Bring it before the Lord and ask for His help. Allow Him to comfort you by His presence and breathe new life into your weariness so that you might run all the more in obedience to His Word.

## LIVE IT OUT

**Pray:** As you think about the areas of your spiritual life where you need to move from *knowing* to *believing*, invite God to bridge that gap and transform you in such a way that your life reflects what you claim to believe.

**Study:** Over the course of the next week, devote your quiet time to studying the generosity of God throughout Scripture. Find a handful of passages that describe God's generous heart in order to further shape your understanding of your Heavenly Father.

**Confess:** If you are hiding sin or keeping secret any doubts or fears you have about your spiritual life, seek out a trustworthy believer and confess those today. Trust that the truth of God's Word will not mislead you.

**Ask:** If you are in a season of need, boldly ask God to provide for your needs, like David in the passage we studied. Trust that He is a generous Father who gives good gifts and will provide you with whatever you need for sustenance.

**Praise:** As you reflect on the generosity of God in your life, spend some time each day this week praising God for His gifts to you.