

# Psalm 119

## Intro: Statistics on Bible Importance and Authority

### 1. **Belief about the Bible's authority / literalness**

- A Gallup poll found that among U.S. adults, only **25%** say the Bible is the *actual Word of God* and should be interpreted *literally, word for word*. [UPI+3Gallup.com+3Christian Post+3](#)
- Meanwhile, **58%** of Christians believe the Bible is inspired by God but do *not* hold that every part of it should be taken literally. [Gallup.com+2Christian Post+2](#)
- For those claiming evangelical or “born again” identity, only about **40%** believe the Bible is the actual word of God (literally true), with **51%** saying it is inspired (but not literally every word) and **8%** viewing it more as legend, fable, or moral teaching. [Decision Magazine](#)

### 2. **“Biblical worldview” among pastors**

- A study by *Answers in Genesis* noted that only about **37%** of American pastors have what the study terms a “biblical worldview.” That implies that 63% have worldviews that are “syncretistic” (i.e. blending secular or cultural ideas in ways that depart from a more strict biblical worldview) in at least some areas. [Answers in Genesis](#)
- Another report (Barna, through Preaching.com) suggested that even among Protestant senior pastors, there is variance: only some have a fully biblical worldview, and many congregants do *not* share it even when their pastor does. [Preaching.com](#)

### 3. **How often Scripture/book of the Bible is mentioned in sermons / sermons' content**

- Pew Research found that in evangelical congregations almost **97%** of sermons reference at least one book of the Bible; [Pew Research Center](#)
- But even when scripture is referenced, in some cases sermons might focus more on topical issues, moral applications, or cultural relevance rather than expository, verse-by-verse engagement. (This is more qualitative, but

Lifeway's research shows that churchgoers often complain preaching doesn't teach new truths or engage deeply with Scripture. [Lifeway Research](#))

#### 4. Importance Christians place on the Bible

- From Pew Research / Religious Landscape Study: many Christians say the Bible is extremely or very important in their lives (though "importance" doesn't always translate into regular reading or seeing it as infallible). [Pew Research Center](#)
- Conversely, there is a non-negligible number of Christians for whom the Bible is *less* central: e.g. those who say the Bible is "not too" or "not at all important." While among Catholics that number is higher, among Evangelical Protestants it's much lower. [Pew Research Center](#)

#### 5. Behavior / application vs belief

- Studies show a gap between what people believe about scripture and how it shapes their life. One Lifeway study found that among "church switchers" (people leaving a church for another), only **43%** said preaching at their previous church taught them something they didn't already know; **44%** said it had a focused text-verse-by-verse style. [Lifeway Research](#)
- Also, among larger churches, pastors are less likely to have Bible readings *in addition* to what's used in the sermon (58%) than to simply rely on sermon passages or typical worship readings. [Religion Unplugged](#)

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### Implications

- Even among those who identify strongly as Christian, belief in Scripture being *infallible* or *literal* in all parts is far from universal.
- Many sermons do reference Scripture, but that doesn't always mean deep expository engagement (e.g. expositional preaching, systematic theology, verse-by-verse). There's a difference between quoting Scripture and building beliefs and life on it.
- There seems to be a declining trend in how many fully endorse literal interpretation or view every part of the Bible as equally authoritative or literal.
- There is a behavior gap: what people say about the Bible, and how much it actually shapes their decisions, moral beliefs, worldview, or church involvement.

Big Idea: So many people today claim to have some kind of a relationship with Jesus, but don't hold the Bible as the authoritative Word of God or see its importance. They fail to recognize that the Bible is the only reason we know anything about Jesus or his Words, and to separate Jesus from the Bible is to invent a version of Jesus that suits your desires.

But Jesus is the Word of God made flesh, and if you want a real relationship with Christ, you must also have a real relationship with His Word.

Last week we talked about what it really meant to have a personal relationship with God through Christ. This week we will look at what kind of relationship that means we have with His Word.

The longest chapter in all of scripture is Psalm 119, a chapter wholly dedicated to How David felt about God's Word.

## Psalm 119 Structure

Psalm 119 is 176 verse). It's an acrostic psalm: 22 stanzas, each corresponding to a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and each stanza has 8 verses that begin with that Hebrew letter.

Every stanza emphasizes the Word of God using terms like *law, statutes, precepts, commandments, decrees, word, ordinances, testimonies, judgments*.

### Why is it structured Alphabetically?

#### 1. Completeness and Totality

- Hebrew has 22 letters; by covering them all, Psalm 119 symbolically encompasses the *entirety* of thought and expression. It's as if David is saying: *From A to Z (or Aleph to Tav), every part of life should be shaped by God's Word.*
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#### 2. Memorization and Meditation Aid

- In ancient times, acrostics helped with memorization — making it easier for God's people to internalize this very long psalm. Each stanza being tied to a single Hebrew letter would serve as a teaching tool, almost like a **catechism in poetic form**.
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### 3. Order Reflecting God’s Word

- The psalm’s ordered structure mirrors the orderliness of God’s Word itself. Just as the alphabet provides structure to language, God’s law provides **structure and order to life**.
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### 4. Beauty and Excellence

- The artistry of Psalm 119 reflects the beauty and perfection of God’s Word. The carefully crafted form models the truth that God’s Word is not chaotic, but **beautifully designed, dependable, and worthy of admiration**.
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### 5. Exhaustive Devotion to the Word

- The psalmist exhausts every letter, every possibility, in praising and meditating on Scripture. This communicates a heart that is *fully given over* to the Word of God — nothing left out, nothing untouched.
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### 6. Foreshadowing Christ, the Word

- Jesus is called the “Alpha and Omega” (Revelation 22:13) — the beginning and the end. Psalm 119’s A-to-Z structure can be seen as foreshadowing that Christ Himself is the **living Word** who encompasses everything from start to finish.

## Psalm 119 A to Z breakdown

### Aleph (vv. 1–8)

*Blessed are the <sup>[a]</sup>undefiled in the way,  
Who walk in the law of the Lord!*

*<sup>2</sup>Blessed are those who keep His testimonies,  
Who seek Him with the whole heart!*

- The Word brings Blessings
- 

### Beth (vv. 9–16)

<sup>9</sup> How can a young man cleanse his way?

*By taking heed according to Your word.*

<sup>10</sup> With my whole heart I have sought You;

*Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!*

<sup>11</sup> Your word I have hidden in my heart,

*That I might not sin against You.*

- The Word brings Purity
- 

### **Gimel (vv. 17–24)**

<sup>17</sup> Deal bountifully with Your servant,

*That I may live and keep Your word.*

<sup>18</sup> Open my eyes, that I may see

*Wondrous things from Your law.*

- The Word brings Life
  - The Word Brings Wonderous Revelation
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### **Daleth (vv. 25–32)**

<sup>25</sup> My soul clings to the dust;

*Revive me according to Your word.*

<sup>26</sup> I have declared my ways, and You answered me;

*Teach me Your statutes.*

- The Word brings Revival
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### **He (vv. 33–40)**

<sup>33</sup> Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes, And I shall keep it to the end.

<sup>34</sup> Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your law;

*Indeed, I shall observe it with my whole heart.*

<sup>35</sup> Make me walk in the path of Your commandments, For I delight in it.

<sup>36</sup> <sup>[a]</sup> Incline my heart to Your testimonies, And not to covetousness.

<sup>37</sup> Turn <sup>[a]</sup> away my eyes from looking at worthless things,

*And revive me in <sup>[b]</sup> Your way.*

- The Word brings Holiness
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### **Waw/Vav (vv. 41–48)**

*<sup>41</sup> Let Your mercies come also to me, O Lord—  
Your salvation according to Your word.*

*<sup>42</sup> So shall I have an answer for him who <sup>□</sup>reproaches me,  
For I trust in Your word.*

- The Word brings Confidence
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### **Zayin (vv. 49–56)**

*<sup>49</sup> Remember the word to Your servant,  
Upon which You have caused me to hope.*

*<sup>50</sup> This is my comfort in my affliction,  
For Your word has given me life.*

- The Word brings Hope and Comfort
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### **Heth (vv. 57–64)**

*<sup>57</sup> You are my portion, O Lord;  
I have said that I would keep Your words.*

*<sup>58</sup> I entreated Your favor with my whole heart;  
Be merciful to me according to Your word.*

- The Word is our Sustenance
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### **Teth (vv. 65–72)**

*<sup>65</sup> You have dealt well with Your servant,  
O Lord, according to Your word.*

*<sup>66</sup> Teach me good judgment and knowledge,  
For I believe Your commandments.*

*<sup>67</sup> Before I was afflicted I went astray,  
But now I keep Your word.*

- The Word brings Affliction (trials and testing), which bring Good Judgement
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### **Yodh (vv. 73–80)**

<sup>73</sup> *Your hands have made me and fashioned me;  
Give me understanding, that I may learn Your commandments.*  
<sup>74</sup> *Those who fear You will be glad when they see me,  
Because I have hoped in Your word.*

- The Word brings understanding
  - The Word brings Unity
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### **Kaph (vv. 81–88)**

<sup>81</sup> *My soul faints for Your salvation,  
But I hope in Your word.*  
<sup>82</sup> *My eyes fail from searching Your word,  
Saying, “When will You comfort me?”*  
<sup>83</sup> *For I have become like a wineskin in smoke,  
Yet I do not forget Your statutes.*

- The Word brings hope, even in desperate searching
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### **Lamedh (vv. 89–96)**

*Forever, O Lord,  
Your word is settled in heaven.*  
<sup>90</sup> *Your faithfulness endures to all generations;  
You established the earth, and it abides.*

- The Word brings Eternal Security
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### **Mem (vv. 97–104)**

<sup>97</sup> *Oh, how I love Your law!  
It is my meditation all the day.*

<sup>98</sup> You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies;  
For they are ever with me.

- The Word brings Wisdom
  - The Word brings a Sweet Spirit
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### **Nun (vv. 105–112)**

<sup>105</sup> Your word is a lamp to my feet  
And a light to my path.

<sup>106</sup> I have sworn and confirmed  
That I will keep Your righteous judgments.

- The Word brings Light, and Direction
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### **Samekh (vv. 113–120)**

<sup>113</sup> I hate the <sup>[d]</sup>double-minded,  
But I love Your law.

<sup>114</sup> You are my hiding place and my shield;  
I hope in Your word.

- The Word brings Consistency
  - The Word brings Protection
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### **Ayin (vv. 121–128)**

<sup>121</sup> I have done justice and righteousness;  
Do not leave me to my oppressors.

<sup>122</sup> Be surety<sup>[x]</sup> for Your servant for good;  
Do not let the proud oppress me.

<sup>123</sup> My eyes fail from seeking Your salvation  
And Your righteous word.

- The Word brings Justice
- 

### **Pe (vv. 129–136)**

<sup>129</sup> *Your testimonies are wonderful;*

*Therefore my soul keeps them.*

<sup>130</sup> *The entrance of Your words gives light;*

*It gives understanding to the simple.*

- The Word brings Light and Understanding
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### **Tsadhe (vv. 137–144)**

<sup>137</sup> *Righteous are You, O Lord,*

*And upright are Your judgments.*

<sup>138</sup> *Your testimonies, which You have commanded,*

*Are righteous and very faithful.*

- The Word brings Righteousness
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### **Qoph (vv. 145–152)**

<sup>145</sup> *I cry out with my whole heart; Hear me, O Lord!*

*I will keep Your statutes.*

<sup>146</sup> *I cry out to You; Save me, and I will keep Your testimonies.*

<sup>147</sup> *I rise before the dawning of the morning,*

*And cry for help; I hope in Your word.*

- The Word brings Dependence on God
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### **Resh (vv. 153–160)**

<sup>153</sup> *Consider my affliction and deliver me,*

*For I do not forget Your law.*

<sup>154</sup> *Plead my cause and redeem me;*

*Revive me according to Your word.*

- The Word brings Deliverance, Redemption, and Revival
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### **Shin/Sin (vv. 161–168)**

<sup>161</sup> Princes persecute me without a cause,  
But my heart stands in awe of Your word.

<sup>162</sup> I rejoice at Your word  
As one who finds great treasure.

- The Word brings Awestruck Wonder
  - The Word brings Great Treasure
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### **Tav (vv. 169–176)**

<sup>169</sup> Let my cry come before You, O Lord;  
Give me understanding according to Your word.

<sup>170</sup> Let my <sup>[ae]</sup>supplication come before You;  
Deliver me according to Your word.

- The Word brings communion with God through Prayer, Praise, and Worship.

## Our intended relationship with the Word of God:

**Aleph (1–8):** We are to **walk in obedience** to God’s Word as the path of blessing.

**Beth (9–16):** We are to **treasure and guard** God’s Word in our hearts for purity.

**Gimel (17–24):** We are to **seek guidance and counsel** from God’s Word as strangers in this world.

**Daleth (25–32):** We are to **cling to God’s Word** for strength when our soul is weary.

**He (33–40):** We are to **be taught and shaped** by God’s Word in mind and desire.

**Waw/Vav (41–48):** We are to **trust God’s Word** with confidence and delight.

**Zayin (49–56):** We are to **find comfort** in God’s Word during affliction.

**Heth (57–64):** We are to **embrace God and His Word** as our true portion in life.

**Teth (65–72):** We are to **learn through trials** that God’s Word is more valuable than riches.

**Yodh (73–80):** We are to **find purpose and joy** in being formed and guided by God’s Word.

**Kaph (81–88):** We are to **hope in God’s Word** even when nearly consumed by suffering.

**Lamedh (89–96):** We are to *rest in the eternal stability* of God’s Word.

**Mem (97–104):** We are to *meditate on God’s Word* for wisdom sweeter than honey.

**Nun (105–112):** We are to *follow God’s Word* as our lamp and heritage forever.

**Samekh (113–120):** We are to *stand firm in God’s Word* and reject double-mindedness.

**Ayin (121–128):** We are to *submit to God’s Word* as perfectly righteous and true.

**Pe (129–136):** We are to *long for and weep over* God’s Word being neglected.

**Tsadhe (137–144):** We are to *trust the righteousness* of God’s Word in all circumstances.

**Qoph (145–152):** We are to *cry out to God’s Word* day and night with confidence in its truth.

**Resh (153–160):** We are to *cling to God’s Word* for deliverance and eternal truth.

**Shin/Sin (161–168):** We are to *rejoice in and obey* God’s Word with great peace.

## How Christ Makes it Possible

**The Final Challenge:** How can we have such a committed relationship with words on a page, or in a book?

Simple: they aren’t just words in a book.

It’s clear through this Psalm that David recognized that his relationship with God’s Word was intrinsically tied to his relationship with God himself, even if David didn’t yet see or understand to what depths.

But we do.

### John 1

*<sup>1</sup>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup>All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. <sup>4</sup>In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup>And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not <sup>[a]</sup>comprehend it.*

*<sup>6</sup>There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup>This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. <sup>8</sup>He was not that Light, but was*

sent to bear witness of that Light. <sup>9</sup> That<sup>[b]</sup> was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.

<sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. <sup>11</sup> He came to His <sup>[c]</sup>own, and His <sup>[d]</sup>own did not receive Him. <sup>12</sup> But as many as received Him, to them He gave the <sup>[e]</sup>right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

**<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.**

David uses an alphabetic, A to Z format to express the completeness and fullness of God's Word. Christ, the Alpha and Omega fulfills the Word in its entirety because He is the Word. When God spoke the Universe into existence, it was Jesus, the Word of God that made all things. The Spirit moved, The Father Spoke, and the Son Made.

*"3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made."*

- **He is the Alpha and Omega**
- Every devotion David expressed toward the written Word finds its fulfillment in **Jesus Christ, the Living Word.**
- **Our relationship with Scripture and our relationship with Christ are inseparable**, because to reject or neglect the Word of God is to reject the very One who is the Word made flesh.
- Just as Psalm 119 exalts the Word as our guide, comfort, and life, so too Jesus embodies those realities: **He is the light to our path, the truth that sanctifies us, and the life that revives us.**

Through His death and resurrection, Jesus has made it possible for us not just to read the Word, but to **receive the Word into our hearts**. The same Spirit who inspired the Scriptures now writes them on our hearts, enabling us to live out what David longed for.

So if we want a *real relationship with Christ*, we cannot separate Him from His Word. To love Jesus is to love His Word; to cling to Him is to cling to the unchanging, eternal Word of God.

Hebrews 4:12

*12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*