

3 Priorities in Reading God's Word That Will Keep Out the Enemy's Lies

The Psalms have been a part of my daily Bible reading for years. I just love the poetic masterpieces that express raw emotion and, at the same time, authentic praise! This week I've been meditating on Psalm 119.

Psalm 119 is a poetic masterpiece. In fact, it has been called a "mathematical masterpiece" by some translators. It has 22 stanzas, each with eight lines. Each stanza begins with the same Hebrew letter and progresses in succession, moving through the Hebrew alphabet. Isn't that amazing? Imagine the work it took to create such a masterpiece!

The entire psalm points to the joy and happiness for those who prioritize the Word of God in their lives. Do you want to be happy? Peaceful? Full of joy? Well, then, open your Bible and dig in! Will you understand everything? No. But don't let that intimidate you. Ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes and give you revelation as you read.

As you open your Bible and dive in, I recommend using a journal. I started this as a young college student. I write down thoughts that come to me from each passage. I may write entire verses so that the words penetrate my mind more completely. I also ask myself some very basic questions revolving around three basic priorities.

3 Priorities When Reading Scripture:

Listen: Knowing that God speaks through Scripture, I set my heart to listen. Learn to ask yourself when reading your Bible, "What is God speaking to me through this passage?" You might not think of anything right away, but a thought might

come to you later in the day. A story might intrigue you. Simply write your thoughts down and ask the Holy Spirit what He is speaking to you.

There have been many times when I have found a story from Scripture delightful, but it hasn't really spoken to me. I write down a few thoughts. Later, perhaps even days or weeks, the Holy Spirit will bring that story back to my mind and show me some truth that He wants me to apply to my life.

Receive: I believe that the Scriptures in their original form are inerrant. They are the final authority on life and godliness. When I am reading Scripture, I seek to understand the cultural background and the context of what is being spoken, but then I open my heart. I may whisper, "Lord, I receive this as truth in my life." There have been many times when I have felt discouraged or defeated, and I've opened my Bible and read words of hope. I don't think those words of hope are only for the people they were written to. The Holy Spirit stirs in my heart so that I receive those words as truth for me as well. For example, the prophet Isaiah wrote, "who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint" (Isa. 40:31). That wasn't just for the people of Israel; those words are for you and me as well. As we hope and wait on the Lord, He will renew our strength. The key is waiting with hope.

Respond with faith: This last principle is perhaps most important. It does us no good if we read the Word and turn away thinking, *Oh, that was a great story!* We have to respond to whatever God is speaking to us with faith. Here's the thing: It will take faith to respond to God's Word! The enemy of your soul will always speak lies and doubt to you. When you're reading the Word and you read, "Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, and who seek Him with all their heart" (Ps. 119:2), Satan will whisper in your ear, "Really? Are you happy? The Scriptures are outdated. They place too many

boundaries on your life. No one believes any of that stuff anymore!" Or, he might say, "Did God really mean that?" Honestly, that's the oldest trick in the book. Remember in the Garden of Eden, the enemy asked Eve, "Did God really say [that]?" (see Gen. 3:1, NIV).

Friend, don't let that enemy fool you. Receive and respond by faith to what God speaks in His Word. He has your best interests in mind. He is the one who is truth and only speaks truth in His Word, so respond in faith. Do what you perceive He is telling you to do. Step out in faith to obey. Then and only then will you experience deep, lasting joy. {eoa}

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