

# Leader's Guide

*Sweeter  
than* **Chocolate!**

*Sweet Words and Real Solutions from God's Book*

*An Inductive Study of Psalm 119*

by

*pam gillaspie*

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### **Sweeter than Chocolate**

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*Sweeter than Chocolate*

An Inductive Study of Psalm 119

## Leader notes

# Sweeter than Chocolate!

*Sweet Words and Real Solutions from God's Book*

## *An Inductive Study of Psalm 119*

There is nothing quite like your favorite pair of jeans. You can dress them up, you can dress them down. You can work in them, play in them, shop in them . . . live in them. They always feel right. It is my hope that the structure of this Bible study will fit you like those jeans; that it will work with your life right now, right where you are whether you're new to this whole Bible thing or whether you've been studying the Book for years!

How can this be? Smoke and mirrors, perhaps? The new mercilessly thrown in the deep end of exegesis or the experienced given pom-poms and the job of simply cheering others on? None of the above.

*Sweeter than Chocolate!* is designed with options that will allow you to go as deep each week as you desire. If you're just starting out and feeling a little overwhelmed, stick with the main text and don't think a second thought about the sidebar assignments. If you're looking for a challenge, then take the sidebar prompts and go ahead and dig all the way to China! As you move along through the study, think of the sidebars and "Digging Deeper" boxes as that 2% of lycra that you find in certain jeans . . . the wiggle-room that will help them fit just right.

Beginners may find that they want to start adding in some of the optional assignments as they go along. Experts may find that when three children are throwing up for three days straight, foregoing those assignments for the week is one way to live wisely.

Life has a way of ebbing and flowing and this study is designed to ebb and flow right along with it!

**Enjoy!**

Leader notes

# Week One

## Taste and See

### BEFORE CLASS

#### Hot Topics in these Stanzas:

Is the Bible what it claims to be? Does the Bible do what it claims it does? If it does what it claims, then for the one who reads and believes it, life will never be the same! It promises wisdom, peace, counsel, direction, joy, and life—and that's just the start. In this session we'll examine the elephant in the room—Why does it seem not to work so often? The problem is not with the Bible. Is the problem that we don't know how to read it? Or that we don't know how to look at it as God intended? Perhaps we've bought the lie that the Bible tastes more like bitter vegetables than sweet chocolate! Grasping the foundational principle that God's Word is sweet can propel us forward as we learn to do life His way. And when we do, we'll begin to see His answers clearly!

#### Class-at-a-Glance

Segments	2 Hour Class	1 Hour Class	Topic
Segment 1:	30 min.	15 min.	Class Basics <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introductions</li><li>• Ground rules</li><li>• How to Use this Study</li></ul>
Segment 2:	15 min.	15 min.	Get Them Talking
Segment 3:	15 min.	OMIT	Read It!
Optional Break	15 min.	OMIT	
Segment 4:	15 min.	15 min.	Background Information
Segment 5:	15 min.	OMIT	Inductive Study Basics
Segment 6:	15 min.	15 min.	Aleph - Choosing the way of God over the way of shame

## **BEFORE YOU START**

### **HOW TO LEAD THIS STUDY:**

#### **The Basics**

Well here you are! You've either been called, appointed, or dragged into leading a Bible study. Regardless, here is some good news – *Sweeter than Chocolate!* is designed to be flexible to both students and teachers alike, to give newer teachers the help they need, and to give more seasoned teachers wings to grow their gifting. With this in mind, please use this Leader Guide to help you prepare to lead a *Sweeter than Chocolate!* group. Always remember that it's a guide, not a strict set of step-by-step rules and edicts.

Although presented as a 6-week study with weekly homework, *Sweeter than Chocolate!* can be used over a longer duration of time with “homework” sections done either at home or during class time. If class time is limited, as is often the case for Sunday School, leaders may choose to work through as little as one stanza per week, especially if the work is done together in class. Thus, it is possible for this 6-week Bible study to flex to as much as a 22-week Sunday School class.

For those who have ample time and are running a 6-week study, consider adding an additional week or two for a technology day or a guest speaker on a topic of interest. That person could be a pastor, local Bible professor, or someone well-versed on a particular topic in the text. I took a week to discuss the concept of Sabbath and Skyped\* in my mentor from a couple of states away. This is a way to mix things up and keep the class on their toes by bringing in additional material. It also gives you the flexibility to match the class length to the needs of things like, say, the church calendar. Hey, it's reality!

Some of you who are reading this Leader Guide are thrilled to be leading, because you have the spiritual gift of teaching. You may find that you don't even use this guide – that's fine! If God has gifted you to teach and you like doing your own research and prep, that is great!! Praise God! Go entrust to the faithful who will be able to teach others also! Others of you, undoubtedly, have been dragged in kicking and screaming. (That was me for a few years while I was still resisting my gifting!) Somebody had to lead and you were drafted. It is my deep hope that you will find help in this guide to make your leading experience not only trauma free, but also filled with great joy!

Small groups or Sunday School classes may decide to simply talk through the questions that are in the lesson, but study groups will benefit by bringing in some additional talk points and material.

\* Skype is a free service that allows you to use the internet to video conference in guest speakers or those who just want to listen in to class. Learn more at [www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com).

### *Leader notes*

#### **About the Leader Guide**

This leader guide is a basic outline, a road map of one way to go in a class discussion. Just like there are many ways from Chicago to Chattanooga, there are different ways to run a class.

Student pages on the left will orient you to where you are in the lesson. Some post-40s like me won't be able to read them, but they give us visual clues nonetheless. Each week we'll suggest a time frame for running the class one or two hours. You'll find additional background information and suggested discussion questions on each stanza as well as illustration and application material worked in along the way. While you may choose to use some of the illustrations in the leader guide, the best illustrations for your class will come from you! Watch for the key points in the illustrations and see how you can weave in first-hand truth for your students.

For the sake of space, typically only suggested discussion questions are listed. Occasionally we'll fill in an answer if it's not self-evident. Also, when possible we'll leave space for you to fill in your own thoughts so you don't have to go flipping back and forth between the student book and the leader guide. Finally, you may look at the material and think, "There is no way that I can cover all this in the allotted time!" If that's the case, you can pick and choose from the elements to craft your lesson.

#### **Additional Teaching Segments**

If you have the spiritual gift of teaching, this is a segment you'll want to pay special attention to. Here is where you start honing your gift. We'll suggest several directions to take the teaching, but the choice is yours. Do remember that your class will *learn* more when they are given the opportunity to *discuss* more. So as you weave in these segments, the more you draw them into reasoning through the Scriptures with you, the better off everyone will be! One other caution. Given the amount of time most classes need, you will probably want to weave in just one or at the most two additional teaching segments per class. You'll get the feel of it, but never lose sight of the need to engage your class and **GET THEM TALKING** about what they're learning!

One more thought. This is also an area where you can start bringing potential leaders along. Give them the chance to work on the supplemental teaching from time to time or set them loose to share with the class what they've learned in a **Digging Deeper** section. Always be looking for tomorrow's teachers among today's students!

*Leader notes*

**Starting on Time**

One way to start on time every week is to read through Psalm 119 at the beginning of class. It will take approximately 15 minutes. In doing this you will reinforce the importance of continually being in the text of Scripture itself. As odd as it may sound, when we study deeply the temptation to stray away from the text and toward commentaries can be intense. By reading the text every week and starting promptly (even if it is just you and your most prompt student!), you will reinforce the importance of the text and gain the added bonus of training stragglers to arrive on time.

**START CLASS HERE**

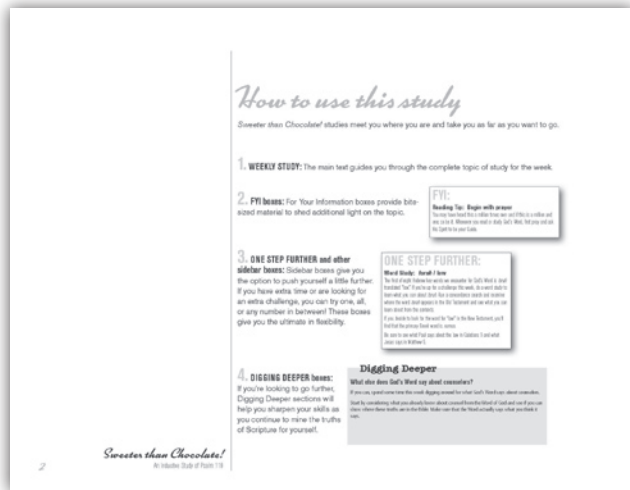
**SEGMENT #1: CLASS BASICS**

**Introductions and Ground Rules**

- **Introduce yourself**
- **Have class introduce themselves**
- **Set boundaries**

Make sure to allocate adequate time the first week of class for general introductions and ground rules. If you're teaching men or a mixed group, estimate based on the size of your class. If you're teaching women, take the time you think this will require and double it. Asking everyone to share their name and respond to a specific question will help keep things moving. If you ask for "a little bit about yourself," you're sure to get more than a little bit! Start out by introducing yourself in a concise manner to set the tone. Feel free to use an icebreaker game or other ideas you have to help people connect.

You'll also want to establish ground rules during Week One. Psychologists say the time to set boundaries in any relationship is the first meeting. A boundary can always be relaxed, but it is very difficult to establish or strengthen one if you do not set it properly at the start. This applies both to how you will lead your class discussions as well as how you will allow your class to interact with you throughout the week. Depending on your situation, you may ask them to contact you primarily by e-mail and make certain times of the day off-limits. My classes know I rarely answer the phone when my kids are home from school. That is my boundary. When they



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are home, my primary job is being their mom. Your class will respect this and perhaps even learn the importance of proper boundaries in their own lives from your example.

Let your class know that it is your job as the teacher/facilitator to keep the discussion on track and that you may from time to time have to reel a person in, stop a rabbit trail, or discontinue until after class an interesting, but off-topic discussion. Also let them know that you do not have all the answers. This will be freeing for everyone! If they ask a question you can't answer, either look into it further yourself or (preferably) assign it to the questioner for further study. This will draw out future teachers – who come back with it answered and prepared to share. Assigning questions also helps people begin discerning what makes a germane question.

Encouraging your class to ask questions and helping them to learn how to ask right questions is a huge part of your job as a teacher. Still, as important as questions are, more questions can be asked than we have biblical answers for. Sometimes you will simply have to answer with an honest, "I don't know."

**HOW TO USE THIS STUDY**

[page 2]

**Basics of the Chocolate study guide and philosophy**

- **WEEKLY STUDY material**
- **FYI boxes**
- **ONE STEP FURTHER and other sidebar boxes**
- **DIGGING DEEPER boxes**

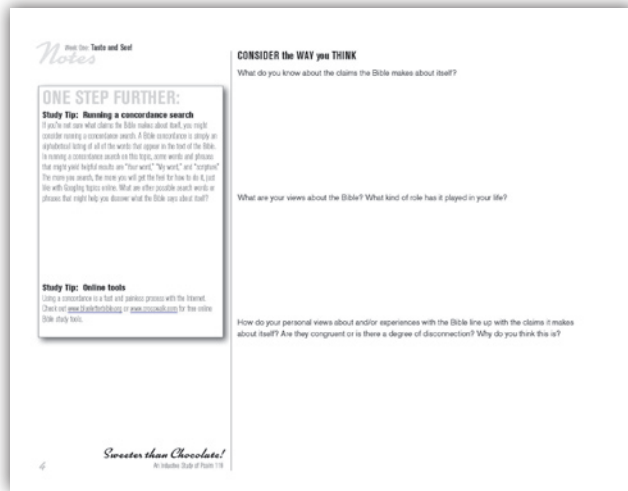
While the study is self-explanatory, reinforce its flexibility with your students. Direct them to the "How to use this study" page of their books and encourage them to find a level of study that brings joy and not guilt. They can do more one week, less the next; they can mix and match and find the fit that is right. You may have students who are overburdened and overbooked. Piling on and guiltting them with a ton of homework will not fix the problem. Rather, help them find the joy and sweetness of God's Word and ask His Spirit to begin healing through the power of the Word. Take some time to review student page 2 with them and let them know you believe in them and their ability to use this material.

# Week One: Taste and See

## Class pages



page 3



page 4

## Sweeter than Chocolate

An Inductive Study of Psalm 119

### Leader notes

## SEGMENT #2: GET THEM TALKING

[pages 3-4]

### Presuppositions, Baggage, and Questions

As you begin to segue into the material, spend some time discussing presuppositions your class members have about the Word of God. This is not a mere matter of airing personal opinions. As we approach the Word, it is important to begin considering the grid we view it through. We all have presuppositions, we all have baggage, we all have grids that impact our study. If any of our presuppositions are based on falsehoods, becoming aware of this is the first step in aligning our views more fully with truth. Here are a few starter questions.

### Discussion Questions:

*What is your view of the Bible? How much do you read it? Does it work?*

*How does our culture view the Bible? What about our church culture?*

*Has the Word shown itself to be sweet in your life? Explain.*

*What difficulties have you encountered in trying to read/study the Bible?*

If you have time, you might want to have one of your students read the quote from [www.theologicalstudies.org](http://www.theologicalstudies.org) that appears on page 6 of the student workbook to help them see that the average Bible reader spends less time in the Word each day than he spends watching commercials in a 30-minute television program.



# Week One: Taste and See

## Class pages

**OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE**

**READ** through the entire text of Psalm 119 and jot down briefly some of the benefits that the psalmist says come from God's Word. We are taking a quick overview right now, so keep your pen in check and don't write down more than one benefit per stanza. Note as you read that the psalmist uses a number of synonyms for God's Word.

What are some of the synonyms for God's Word?

*Notes*

**ONE STEP FURTHER:**

**Thinking ahead**

What might be important questions to ask regarding the background of the Psalm and its context after "Sweeten"? List out some questions on the following pages, but before you turn these into a little time to think what they might be. Give thinking ahead. Anticipate questions, think about other verses that might be relevant, consider other places in Scripture that might shed light on the passage that you are studying. When you would you try it if you had in front of you was the text of Scripture? As you contemplate some of the possible questions, consider where you can find the answers.

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Certainly there are those who already believe that the Bible is what it says it is and does what it says it does. In this study, you will learn more about its benefits.

For skeptics the invitation is as clear as Jesus made it to those He walked with: "Come and see!" He didn't ask for blind faith. He invited people to check things out for themselves.

The psalmist boldly asserts that God's Word is sweet to the taste, leaving it to honey. He writes not only the longest psalm by far at 176 verses, but also the longest single chapter in the Bible as he speaks of the truth and benefits of God's Word from a myriad of angles. Before we dive into the text more closely, though, we need to consider a bit of the background and context of this monumental piece of Scripture.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Psalm 119 is an acrostic poem comprised of 22 stanzas based on the 22 letter Hebrew alphabet. Each stanza has eight lines, each beginning with the respective letter of the Hebrew alphabet. If we were to compose a comparable poem in English, ours would have 26 stanzas. In the first eight line stanza, each line would begin with the letter A. In the second stanza, each of the eight lines would begin with the letter B and so on through the entire alphabet.

**QUESTIONS of AUTHORSHIP and DATE**

In addition to understanding the genre of the literature, other questions we commonly want answered when we begin to study a passage of Scripture concern authorship and dating.

Who wrote it? and When was it written? We can gather some information on these topics by observing the text. That said, however, this is one of the areas where we often find ourselves needing the input of the experts. Scholars can help us wade through issues not readily apparent to us by simply reading the text. The experts, though, will nearly always have varied opinions so there's a sense in which we need to become experts in learning how to utilize the experts! If you're feeling confused right about now, take a deep breath and relax.

So how do we become experts at evaluating the experts, or to put it in other words, at discerning which expert has the truth?

First, make sure that you are seeking yourself both in the text at hand and in the Word of God in general. A great temptation in studying God's Word is to put down the Bible and overuse commentaries and commenters scholars have made about it instead of letting the Holy Spirit guide into all truth. There is, perhaps, no greater error we can make. Scholars are important, but they're not inspired. The power is in the Word, not academic tomes.

*Notes*

**ONE STEP FURTHER:**

**Why not?**

Why not try and learn the Hebrew alphabet as we go along? In order to help us to that end, we'll refer to each stanza by its name from the Hebrew alphabet in addition to using the more common we're accustomed to.

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## Leader notes

### SEGMENT #3: READ IT!

[pages 5-6]

Although it will take between 15 and 20 minutes, I highly recommend you read Psalm 119 aloud with your class. Take turns letting people read stanza by stanza. If you're nervous about leading, this will also give you a little chance to catch your breath and refocus everyone's attention off you and directly on the Word of God.

### SEGMENT #4: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

[pages 7-8]

- General structure
- Authorship and date

Review the basic background information on the Psalm covered in the student book on pages 7-8. Don't let your students get overly flustered that we don't know for sure who wrote this Psalm. We don't know who wrote the book of Hebrews either, but we trust that the same God who sovereignly gave us His Word sovereignly oversaw the canonization of the Bible as well.

*What kind of a poem is Psalm 119?*

*How many stanzas are there? From a poetic standpoint, why is this?*

*What is an "orphan" psalm and what does this have to do with Psalm 119?*

*Who are some of the possible authors?*

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An Inductive Study of Psalm 119

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## **SEGMENT #5: INDUCTIVE STUDY BASICS**

### **Observation | Interpretation | Application**

If your students are unfamiliar with inductive Bible study, be sure to take some time to give them the basics. They will catch up and catch on as we go, but giving them an overview will help put them in context! You'll want to impress on your students that inductive Bible study simply means the Bible is our main source of truth. Before looking for insights from people and commentaries about the Bible, we get into the Word of God itself. We go to the primary source and learn to discover truth for ourselves. Inductive Bible study involves three basic components: observation, interpretation, and application.

#### **1 Observation**

This is a very interactive process, well worth the time because the truths you discover for yourself will be accurate and profound. It begins by asking the five W and H questions.

*Who is speaking? Who is this about? Who are the main characters? Who is the author speaking to?*

*What subjects and/or events are covered in the chapter? What do you learn about the people, the events, and the teachings from the text? What instructions are given?*

*When did or will the events recorded occur?*

*Where did or will this happen? Where was it said?*

*Why is something said? Why will an event occur? Why this time, person, and/or place?*

*How will it happen? How will it be done? How is it illustrated?*

Careful observation leads to interpretation – discovering what the text means.

#### **2 Interpretation**

The more you observe, the greater you'll understand God's Word. Since Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture we'll be looking at contexts and cross-references to help us understand the meaning of God's message, which is what was being communicated to the original audience. Observation and interpretation lead to application.

#### **3 Application**

After we've observed the text and discovered the meaning, we need to think and live accordingly. Although the text of Scripture will have one interpretation – that is, the author meant one thing when he wrote to his original hearers – based on that interpretation we can have numerous applications. The result is a transformed life—the more you and I are in the Word of God and adjusting our thinking and behavior to its precepts for life, the more we are changed into the likeness of Jesus Christ! He is the living Word of God who became flesh, the Savior of the world, our coming King of kings!

**OBSERVE THE TEXT OF SCRIPTURE**  
**READ** the Aleph stanza (Psalm 119:1-8) and mark every word and synonym that refers to God's Word.

*May the Taste and See!*  
**Notes**

**FVI:**  
**Marking the text**  
 While you can mark the text any way that makes sense to you, here is a suggested way to mark the *Word of God* in the Bible.  
 By using a yellow colored pencil to mark synonyms for God's Word, as you identify specific Hebrew words, you can see a different colored pencil or pen to make a box around the related Hebrew words.

**For example:**  
 Hebrews to Jesus be yellow colored in blue. Hebrews to God's command can be yellow colored in green. Be sure this color will be the other synonyms for God's Word appear as well as that directly.

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*May the Taste and See!*  
**Notes**

**FVI:**  
 In the list of Psalm 119, eight key Hebrew words refer to God's Word. Two other words translated "word" are also repeated for over a 100 times frequently.

**Key words:**  
 Law (10x)  
 Testimony (10x)  
 Precept (10x)  
 Statute (10x)  
 Commandment (10x)  
 Ordinance (10x)  
 Word (10x)  
 Word (10x)

**Bonus words:**  
 Way (10x)  
 Way (10x)

**Digging Deeper**  
**Basics of a word study: Blameless**

Doing a word study on BibleGateway will yield some very interesting results. If you have the time, let's work through this one together.

Search on the Hebrew word from the text of Psalm 119:1 and note contexts in which this word is typically used.

If you're using BibleGateway.org you can take the following steps:

1. Type in Psalm 119:1. Change the version to NASB. Click the "Search" button.
2. When you arrive at the next screen, you will see six lettered boxes to the left of Psalm 119:1. Click the "C" button to take you to the concordance link.
3. Click on the Strong's number, in this case H833, which is the link to the original word in Hebrew. Clicking this number will bring up another screen that will give you a brief definition of the word as well as list every occurrence of that particular Hebrew word in the Old Testament.

Before turning to the dictionary definition, scan places where this word is used in Scripture. Examine the general contexts where it is used.

**Interestingly,** by far the greatest use of this word has to do with an undefiled sacrifice, a sacrifice acceptable to God. The highest volume of occurrences is in books that spell out how to keep the Law.

Are any people described as blameless? What can you find out about them? Did they live before or after the Law? Does this make a difference? Why or why not?

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**SEGMENT #6: Aleph (verses 1-8)**

[pages 9-15]

**Key Talk Point:** Choosing the way of God over the way of shame

**Context/Comments:** Repeating the word "way" (*derek*) three times in the initial stanza, the psalmist lays a key foundational piece for the rest of this acrostic poem. We will see as the Psalm unfolds that there are two ways . . . God's way and the false way. Walking in God's way has everything to do with pursuing God through His Word. In Aleph the psalmist first considers the blameless man, moves into a prayer that God will make him blameless, and closes with his resolve to do his part. The Beth stanza picks up with the question, "How can a young man keep his way pure?"

While the psalmist stresses behavior and actions in his pursuit of God, we see an emphasis on the heart as the Psalm opens with four of the fifteen uses of the word heart (*leb/lebab*) occurring within the first two stanzas. It is important to remind your class that the psalmist's behavior pours forth from a heart in relationship with God. This is not empty rule-keeping; this is a heart that obeys because of relationship.

The closing verse of the stanza has an edge to it that will be uncomfortable for students who do not have a strong Old Testament background and understanding of covenants. The **Digging Deeper** section in the homework will help set the context for the statement, "Do not forsake me utterly."

The psalmist will be able to keep God's statutes only as God establishes his ways.

Students tinkering around in the Hebrew may become confused by words that don't translate directly to English. One example is verse 8 in which the Hebrew word *et* opens the line. *Et* marks a direct object in Hebrew and does not translate into English. Assure your students that differences in the language like this will make it difficult to find certain pieces of information from time to time, but they are the exception and not the rule. Students have the tools they need to find out what they need to know!

**Discussion Questions:**

*What pattern do you see in the Aleph stanza (that will continue throughout the Psalm) regarding the placement of synonyms for God's Word?*

*Who does the psalmist focus on in this stanza? Why?*

# Week One: Taste and See

## Class pages

If you have access to other study tools, you may want to check resources like the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* for other scholarly inputs. Record your findings.

Search for blameless in the New Testament and see what you discover.

Focusing on verses 1-4, describe the person the psalmist calls blessed. What does this person do? Why and how does he do it? As you respond, quote directly from the text.

In verse 5, what does the psalmist ask of God for himself?

**Notes**  
**One Step Further:**  
**Word Study: Aram / Iron**  
 The word אֲרָם (aram) means an ascription for God's Word is good. It's used in a challenge that says, "It's a word that is true and you can stand firm on a conviction search and examine where the word first appears in the Old Testament and see what you can learn about from the context."  
 If you decide to look for the word for "iron" in the New Testament, you'll find that the primary Greek word is *σίδηρος*.  
 Do look to see what Paul says about the law in Galatians 3 and what Jesus says in Matthew 5.

**True Stories:**  
**Heath and Job**  
 The most recent Hebrew stories we have of people who are referred to as blameless are both and Job. Heath's story appears in Genesis 3:9, while Job's appears in the book bearing his name. If you are looking for some additional reading, either story will give you a fair idea of the life of a man who was willing in a manner pleasing to God. Both of them lived before the peak of the Law. Although their accounts themselves are more than the full content of Scripture that there is some who is without sin and that it through the perfect sacrifice of Christ that we will one day be reconciled before God in "his sinlessness and beyond reproach" in that life as in Colossians 1:22.

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**Notes**

In the remaining part of the Aleph stanza, what benefits does the psalmist look forward to as a result of keeping God's statutes?

What does the Aleph stanza teach us about God?

**FYI:**  
**Asking questions of the text**  
 The key to success (that's the key word meaning to flow meaning out of someone) is asking questions of the text. The basic investigative questions that "What? Where? When? How? Why?" and "What will be your response?" But every question can be addressed to every verse, and some verses require several questions on the same question. So we fully study 119 together. Ask that not every question that can be asked will be asked, but don't let that stop you from asking other questions and helping further as you see. We will never run out of questions to ask and address to (that's from God's Word).

Does anything in the text bother you? If so, you have a clue that you need to either ask more questions, start praying, or both. Sometimes we are bothered because we have not studied and understood the text fully. Other times we are bothered because we have fully understood and simply don't want to accept or obey. Either way, when a text bothers us, it requires more attention.

Record below anything that is still bothering you within the text, as well as some questions you can ask and strategies you can take to answer the questions. In a little bit, we will look at a potentially bothersome spot together and see what we can discover simply by studying thoroughly.

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### Leader notes

What did you learn about the blameless person from the text? What did you learn about blamelessness from the **Digging Deeper** section?

What are some consequences of shame we see in people's lives today?

Under what circumstances will the psalmist not be ashamed?

What does this involve?

How are lives changed when people are helped to know and follow God's Word? How important do you think freedom from shame would be to people you know? In what ways can forgiveness affect how people live their lives?

### Other Questions They May Ask:

What does the psalmist mean by "blessed"?

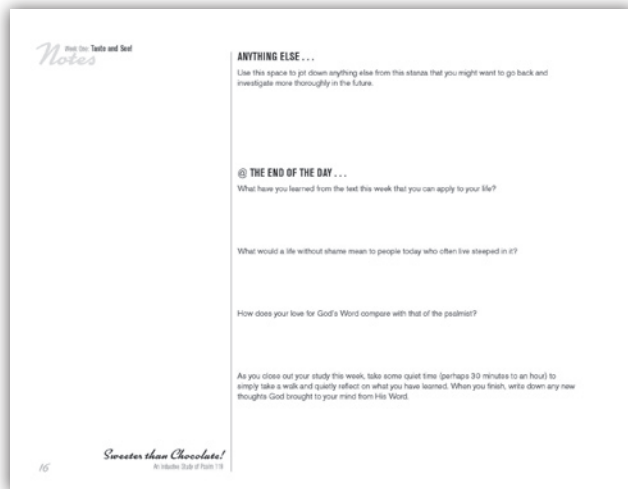
Does "blameless" and doing "no unrighteousness" mean people are working for their salvation or that they have to be perfect?

No! The Bible clearly teaches that no one keeps the Law perfectly. Even those described as blameless are not morally perfect. (See Romans 1-3)

Doesn't the New Testament book of Hebrews teach that God will not forsake us? How does this fit with Psalm 119:8?



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*Leader notes*

**Additional Teaching:**

If you want to add some additional teaching content this week, consider bringing your students to the stories of Noah or Job that are referred to on student page 11. Another option is to flesh out the Old Testament teaching (that Jesus continues in the New Testament) of two paths – we can walk Jesus' narrow path that leads to life or we can walk on a broad path that leads to destruction.

**Live It:**

- Live with a renewed awareness that there are two ways: God's way and a false way. We cannot walk both.
- Consider what it takes to seek God with your whole heart.
- Consider what life without shame means to a person who is steeped in it.
- Consider what truth can mean in your life!

**Summing Up and Looking Ahead**

*[page 16]*

*What key benefits does God's Word claim it provides?*

*How will your life look different this week if you live in light of one of them?*

**Next week:**

Beth – How do I live purely in an X-rated world?

Gimel – Where can I find true counsel?

Daleth – How can I find strength to walk through life?

He – How can I make my life matter?

**Summary Thoughts Aleph through He:**

Although every stanza of Psalm 119 can stand alone, as we work through this class, we are going to watch not only for the message of the individual stanzas, but also for the threads that run throughout, the common themes that tie the psalm together. In Aleph the psalmist begins by examining the life of the blameless, those who walk in the Law of the Lord. The psalmist seeks to walk this way. As he opens the Beth stanza, he asks and answers a related question, "How can a young man keep his way pure?" The answer is by following God's Word. The psalmist prays against wandering from God's commandment. Again, we see the resolve of the psalmist to walk in God's way. With Gimel, outside opposition is introduced. Those who wander are given a name: the arrogant, the cursed. We see that the psalmist lives as a stranger and faces opposition. In the midst of trying times, however, he finds counsel in God's testimonies which delight him. Daleth, too, opens with a heavy mood. The psalmist says his soul cleaves to the dust. He asks God to revive him, teach him, make him understand, strengthen him, and remove the false way from him. By the end of the stanza, he tells us he's clinging to God's testimonies, a sharp contrast from cleaving to the dust at the outset, and that he will run the way of God's commandments. The He stanza continues with the psalmist asking much of God. Again he asks for understanding. We see in this stanza both the psalmist's desire for God and his request that God give him more of a desire for the right way and turn his eyes away from vain, empty things.

*Leader notes*

*Week Two*  
**Your Answers in a World of Questions**

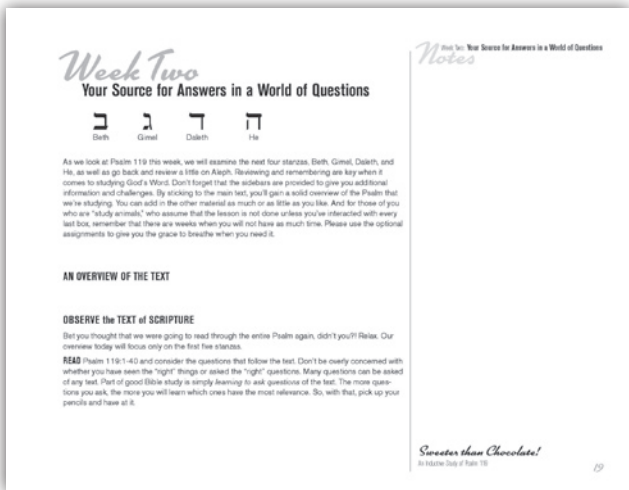
**BEFORE CLASS**

**Hot Topics in these Stanzas:**

Life is filled with problems, but God's Word offers solutions! The first five stanzas of Psalm 119 paint the picture of two ways – God's way and the false way. God's way is blessing, joy, stability and blamelessness. Ever wonder how to live a life without shame? How to teach your kids to live purely in an X-rated world? Where to find true counsel in an Oprah generation? It's not a bunch of dos and don'ts. It comes down to a heart that clings to and follows the Word of God and the God of the Word.

**Class-at-a-Glance**

<i>Segments</i>	<i>2 Hour Class</i>	<i>1 Hour Class</i>	<i>Topic</i>
Segment 1:	15 min. 15 min.	OMIT 10 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Psalm 119</li> <li>• Review basic concepts</li> <li>• Share acrostics poems</li> <li>• Aleph through He overview</li> </ul>
Segment 2:	15 min.	10 min.	Beth - How do I live purely in an X-rated world?
Segment 3:	15 min.	10 min.	Gimel - Where can I find true counsel?
Optional Break	15 min.	OMIT	
Segment 4:	15 min.	10 min.	Daleth - How can I find strength to walk through life?
Segment 5:	15 min.	10 min.	He - How can I make my life matter?
Segment 6:	15 min.	10 min.	Summing Up and Looking Ahead



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*Leader notes*

**START CLASS HERE**

**SEGMENT #1: REVIEW**

[pages 19-22]

**Read Psalm 119**

**Review Basic Concepts**

By now, your students should have a good grasp on the structure of Psalm 119. Although review is sometimes bothersome, a little bit each week will cement the basics and give your class the framework for a lifetime of study. Applications will change over time based on life situations, but remembering the basic facts about the Psalm will serve them well as they revisit this passage in the future. I once had a Greek professor who told us that we should know the Greek alphabet so well that if someone stormed our dorm room in the middle of the night and told us to stand on our head in the dark and recite the Greek alphabet backwards, we should be able to do it. Perhaps a bit overstated, but it paints a picture, yes? Familiarity with the basics will give your students confidence as they work through their homework and begin applying and living the texts.

If your class is working on the Hebrew alphabet (the Aleph Bet), you may want to work through your letters during this time as well, adding each week's letters during your review time.

**Review Questions:**

*What are some significant facts about Psalm 119?*

*What kind of Psalm is Psalm 119?*

*How many stanzas does it have? How many lines per stanza?*

# Class pages

## Week Two: Your Answers in a World of Questions

20 My soul is crushed with anger after Your ordinances at all times.  
 21 You rebuke the arrogant, the cursed, who wander from Your commandments.  
 22 Take away reproach and contempt from me, for I observe Your testimonies.  
 23 Even though pinches of and bit against me, Your servant meditates on Your statutes.  
 24 Your testimonies also are my delight; they are my counselors.

**D**ileth

25 My soul cleaves to the dust, revive me according to Your word.  
 26 I have told of my ways, and You have answered me; teach me Your statutes.  
 27 Make me understand the way of Your precepts, so I will meditate on Your wonders.  
 28 My soul weeps because of grief, strengthen me according to Your word.  
 29 Remove the false way from me, and graciously grant me Your law.  
 30 I have chosen the faithful way; I have placed Your ordinances before me.  
 31 Fidelity to Your testimonies, O LORD, do not put me to shame!  
 32 I shall run the way of Your commandments, for You will enlarge my heart.

**H**e

33 Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes, and I shall observe it to the end.  
 34 Give me understanding, that I may observe Your law and keep it with all my heart.  
 35 Make me walk in the path of Your commandments, for I delight in it.  
 36 Incline my heart to Your testimonies and not to dishonest gain.  
 37 Turn away my eyes from looking at vanity, and revive me in Your ways.  
 38 Establish Your word to Your servant, so that which produces reverence for You.  
 39 Turn away my reproach which I dread, for Your ordinances are good.  
 40 Behold, I long for Your precepts, revive me through Your righteousness.

*Sweeter than Chocolate!*  
 An Inductive Study of Psalm 119

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Notes

**DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own ...**

What are your initial observations on the text?

What questions surface in your mind?

What words or phrases might you focus on for further study?

What is the biggest takeaway that you remember from last week? Do you see any tie-ins with what you've read so far in the text this week?

**QUIZ:**  
**Open book. If you need it!**  
 Before reading, try writing the number of the first five verses of Psalm 119 and the corresponding Hebrew letters.

1.  
 2.  
 3.  
 4.  
 5.

**ONE STEP FURTHER:**  
**The Hebrew Alphabet**  
 If you've wanted to learn the Hebrew alphabet during this class, I will take some questions. Take a few minutes and write the first five Hebrew letters. Write each letter 10 times on a line and use the same sheet. Remember the first grade and enjoy!

1.  
 2.  
 3.  
 4.  
 5.

*Sweeter than Chocolate!*  
 An Inductive Study of Psalm 119

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### Leader notes

*If it were in English, how would it be laid out?*

It would follow the alphabet. The first eight lines would begin with A; the second stanza of eight lines would begin with B, etc.

*What is the overall theme?*

*How many synonyms are used for God's Word and what are some of them?*

*What significant number is associated with this Psalm?*

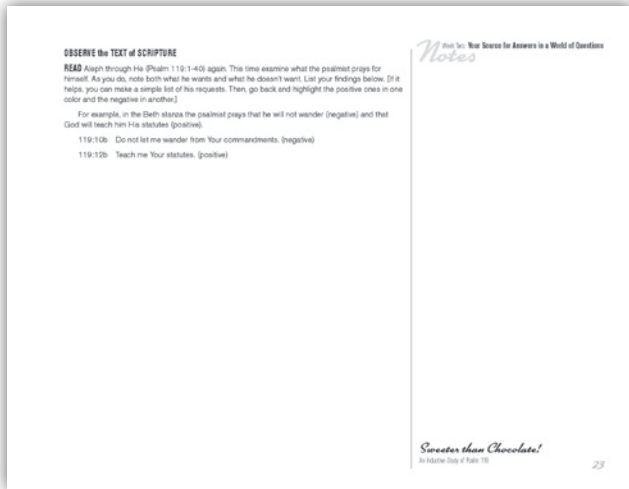
Eight: eight lines per stanza; eight key words associated with the concept of God's Word.

*What is the biggest takeaway application you have had thus far?*

### Acrostic Poems:

If you have time, see if any students want to share their acrostic poems.





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*Leader notes*

**Aleph through He Overview:**

**Discussion Questions:**

*What does the psalmist pray for and against in the Aleph through He stanzas?*

*What points align with your life?*

Give students opportunities to wrestle with this. One good way to help people start looking for specifics is to offer a specific, authentic example from your own life. I, for example, find that wandering and seeking vanity are topics I need to turn into prayers of my own. At my age, I rarely set out to sin, but when I lose focus, when my eyes start looking at things that are vain and empty, I stray off course. This looks different at different times. Sometimes I get too focused on my plans instead of resting in God's. Sometimes my eyes stray to time-wasting behaviors on the television or computer. It rarely starts big, but when my focus shifts it can cause wandering.

If your group is shy, consider breaking them up into small groups for discussion and then bringing the conversation back to the large group.

**Notes**  
 How do I live purely in a world of questions

**OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE**  
**READ** the Beth stanzas and mark every synonym for the Word of God. When you have done that, record below what you learned from the stanzas about God's Word.

**Beth**

9. How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word.  
 10. With all my heart I have sought You; do not let me wander from Your commandments.  
 11. Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You.  
 12. Around me have I set Your statutes, O LORD; teach me Your statutes.  
 13. With my lips I have told of all the ordinances of Your mouth.  
 14. I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches.  
 15. I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches.  
 16. I shall delight in Your statutes; I shall not forget Your word.

**DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .**  
 What did you learn from this stanza about God's Word?

What question does the psalmist open the Beth stanza with?

What kind of reference does this have in our world today? In your family? In your walk with God?

*Sweeter than Chocolate!*  
 An Inductive Study of Psalm 119

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**Notes**  
 How do I live purely in a world of questions

**FYI:**  
**Wandering . . .**  
 The Hebrew root used here for wander is adopted generally to include a sin that is committed inadvertently, according to the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. The same Hebrew root is used for sleeping, as sleep is when they "wander their way to lustful" (1). It also does the work, go off course, and so on people.

**TRUE STORIES:**  
**David's wandering and return**  
 In David's journal Psalm 119, we have a striking picture from his own life of how he wandered for a season. In the account, however, we also have the picture of a wanderer who returned to his God to finish.  
 Take some time today to read the account of David from 2 Samuel 11 and 12. How does Psalm 119 which came from David's walk after he associated with Bathsheba. Consider what caused David to wander and God's faithfulness, but also the end consequences he reaped.

How does he answer his own question in the text?

What do we learn about the psalmist's heart in the Beth stanzas?

In each of the heart references, what other focus does the line of text contain? The psalmist has done something with his heart. What and why?

In verse 10, the psalmist writes, "Do not let me wander from Your commandments." What kind of picture does the word "wander" bring to mind? How has wandering exhibited itself in your life? In the lives of those close to you?

Can you identify anything in your life that cultivates wandering?

What antidotes does the text give to wandering?

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 An Inductive Study of Psalm 119

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*Leader notes*

**SEGMENT #2: Beth (verses 9-16)**

[pages 25-27]

**Key Talk Point:** How do I live purely in an X-rated world?

**Context/Comments:** The Aleph stanza has been defining the blameless and pure person. Beth asks and answers the question of how to be this person. If your students are trying to identify the Hebrew words that begin with Beth, they will run into trouble. In Hebrew, a common prefix used the same way we use prepositions is attached to many of the words in this stanza. Here the psalmist had a little more flexibility in regard to language and word choice.

The Hebrew letter Beth does double duty, making two different sounds. When it appears as you see it in the workbook it is sometimes referred to as Veth and makes the sound of our letter V. However, when a dot (technically called a dagesh) appears within the Beth, it makes the same sound as our letter B. This is helpful to know when you use start looking at Hebrew words. *Dabar* (word), for instance, will show up translated in some materials as *davar*. Why? Some people differentiate in transliteration between the Beth and Veth, others don't. Same word, different transliteration techniques. No worries!

**Discussion Questions:**

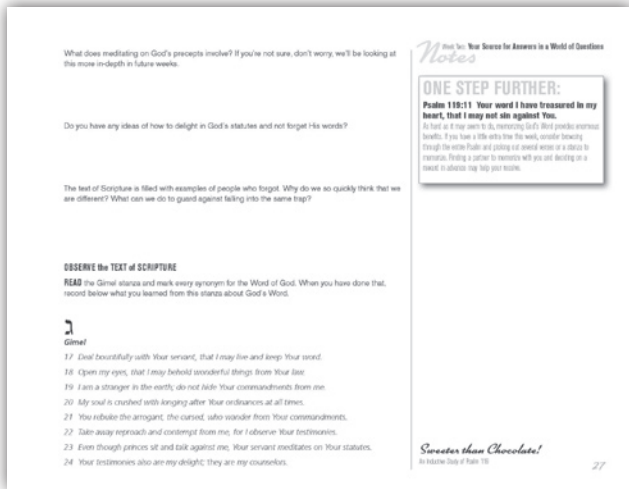
*What question does Beth open up with?*

*What are some specific threats to a life of purity today? For yourself? Your spouse? Your children?*

*How does the state of the heart relate to the propensity to wander?*

*According to the psalmist, how does one keep his way pure?*

*How does this align with the way we try to live purely or enforce purity in our children or spouses?*



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*Leader notes*

Someone in your class will probably latch onto the fact that we often try to legislate purity in our children. Age-appropriate restrictions certainly are part of the equation for protecting children in a sinful world. My husband and I are very careful about what movies our kids watch and what video games they play. We have always tried to explain the “why” when we give a “no” and have tried to replace with something better. Now that our children are bigger, though, while we can still make rules, we cannot always enforce them. I don't know everything that my teenage son does, and I know that a rule alone will not restrain him. The only thing that will stop him when he is beyond my reach is knowing and treasuring God's Word and holding fast to His ways. It comes down to the heart.

Ever tried to diet? Following the rules may keep you for a time, but unless you have a change of heart and mind, you will eventually fall.

The Word treasured in the heart is what keeps us from sinning against God (v. 11).

*What practical ways can we treasure God's Word in our hearts? (This is a great place to add teaching on memorizing.)*

**Additional Teaching:**

If you have the gift of teaching, you may want to weave in the account of David's wandering (found in 2 Samuel 11 and 12) addressed in the TRUE STORIES sidebar. You may also bring this up as class discussion or omit. Here are some of the basics. David didn't wake up one morning deciding to stray from God. Rather, we see a progression. While on his rooftop in Jerusalem, David saw a woman. Seeing the woman was not a sin, but it set off a series of actions in which David . . .

- Sent and inquired about the beautiful woman that he had seen bathing
- Sent messengers and took her although he knew she was married to one of his soldiers
- Committed adultery with her and sent her back home
- Tried to cover his sin

**Live It:**

- God's Word is the way to purity.
- If we are to live purely in our world, we must diligently learn and treasure God's Word.
- God can keep us from wandering, but apart from His Word we are prone to wander.

What does meditating on God's precepts involve? If you're not sure, don't worry, we'll be looking at this more in-depth in future weeks.

Do you have any ideas of how to delight in God's statutes and not forget His words?

The text of Scripture is filled with examples of people who forgot. Why do we so quickly think that we are different? What can we do to guard against falling into the same trap?

**OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE**  
**READ** the Gimel stanza and mark every synonym for the Word of God. When you have done that, record below what you learned from this stanza about God's Word.

**1**  
**Gimel**

17 Deal beautifully with your servant, that I may live and keep Your word.  
 18 Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law.  
 19 I am a stranger in the earth; do not hide Your commandments from me.  
 20 My soul is crushed with kneeling after Your ordinances at all times.  
 21 You rebuke the arrogant, the cursed, who wander from Your commandments.  
 22 Turn away reproach and contempt from me, for I observe Your testimonies.  
 23 Even though princes sit and talk against me, Your servant meditates on Your statutes.  
 24 Your testimonies also are my delight; they are my counselors.

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What do you learn from the stanza about God's Word?

**DISCUSS with your GROUP or PENDER on your own...**

How does the tone of this stanza differ from that of Aleph and Beth? What can you glean about the general circumstances of the psalmist's life? What clues from the text suggest this change in tone?

What kinds of people are mentioned in the Gimel stanza? What do you learn about them from the text?

Having just considered the concept of wandering in the Beth stanza, what kind of people wander according to the Gimel stanza?

It is not surprising that given the people the psalmist is dealing with he needs counsel. Consider your own life for a moment. Who was the last person you turned to for counsel? Remember, even if you consulted a book or some form of media, there is a person behind the counsel you received.

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*Leader notes*

**SEGMENT #3: Gimel (verses 17-24)**

**Key Talk Points:** Where can I find true counsel?  
 Living as a stranger!

**Context/Comments:** Aleph and Beth have discussed blamelessness and the psalmist's desire to walk that way. The Gimel stanza has the first indication of outside opposition – of those who defy God. By contrast, the psalmist refers to himself here for the first time in the psalm with the phrase “Your servant.” He opens the stanza with the phrase (v. 17) and uses it again toward the end of the section (v. 23). While Beth introduces the concept of wandering, Gimel puts a face on it (v. 21). In a sense, Aleph and Beth show us two paths. Gimel shows us the people on these paths and the friction that occurs. In the midst, the psalmist finds true counsel in God's testimonies.

**Discussion Questions:**

*What kind of people enter the scene and interact with the psalmist?*

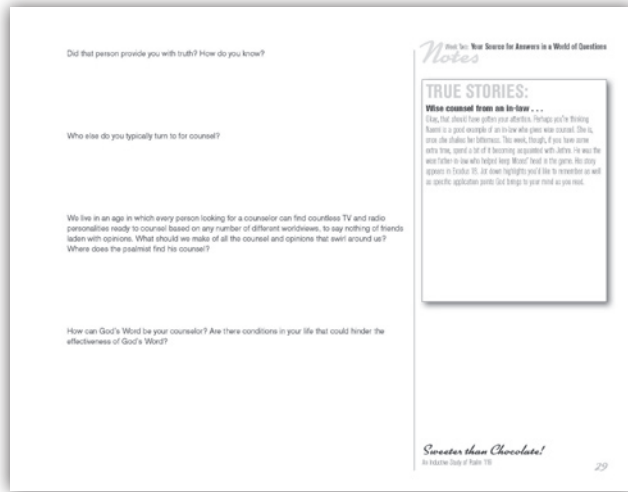
*How would you describe the psalmist's situation?*

*Do you live as a stranger? What other biblical characters were “strangers” or “sojourners”? How does living with this realization change us?*

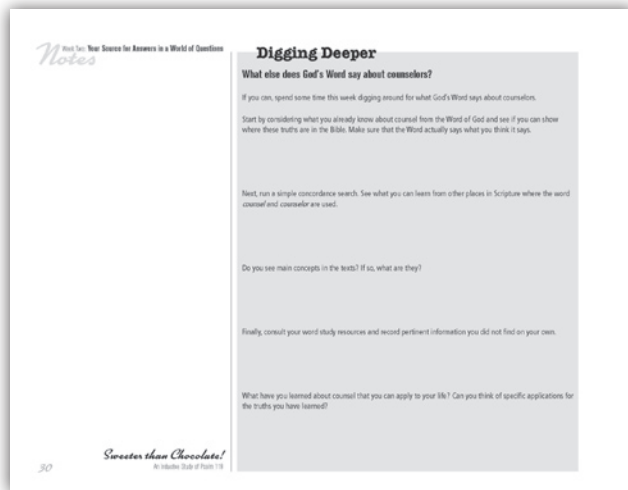
*The psalmist tells us that God's testimonies are his delight and his counselors. Why do people need counsel?*

# Week Two: Your Answers in a World of Questions

## Class pages



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### Leader notes

Who or what are some of the common counselors of our culture?

Who did you last turn to for counsel?

How can we weigh the truth of counsel we receive?

How do we get counsel from God's Word? How do we apply it?

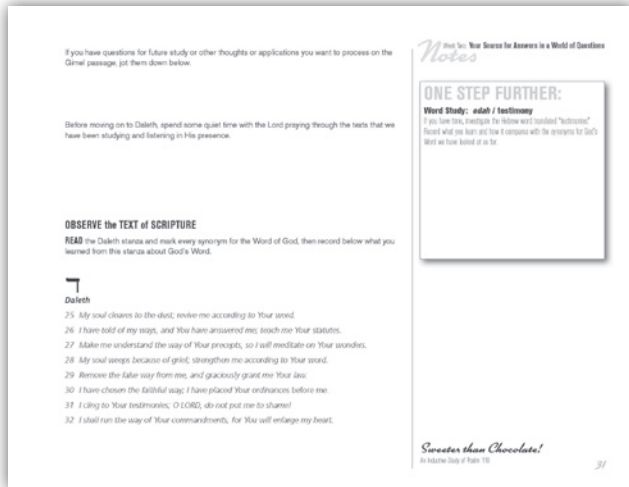
### Additional Teaching:

At this point, you may want to do some research and unpack the concept of worldly counsel versus the counsel of God. Psalms 33 and 106 are two possible starting points. Another option for further teaching is to examine stories of counsel from the Scriptures. There are many to choose from. Your class may have looked at Jethro. Rehoboam is an example of a bad outcome.

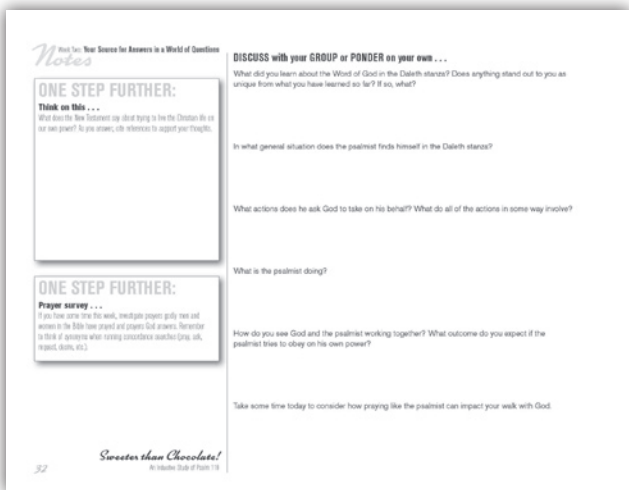
### Live It:

- Following Christ will mean living as a stranger.
- For counsel I can trust, I must know God's Word.

### OPTIONAL BREAK



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*Leader notes*

**SEGMENT #4: Daleth (verses 25- 32)**

[pages 31-34]

**Key Talk Points:** How can I find strength to walk through life?  
 The importance of clinging to God  
 Choosing the faithful way

**Context/Comments:** Like Gimel which precedes, the Daleth stanza begins with a more somber mood. Interestingly, the word translated “cleaves” (*dabaq*) in verse 25 (“My soul cleaves to the dust”) is the same Hebrew word as “cling” in verse 31 (“I cling to Your testimonies”). We see the psalmist moving from cleaving to the dust to clinging to God’s testimonies. Of the 13 occurrences of *derek* (way/path) in Psalm 119, a whopping five show up in Daleth. Indeed, this is “the stanza of the path” and it answers the question where to find strength to walk God’s path. Two more occurrences of *derek* appear in the He stanza which follows.

**Discussion Questions:**

*What change do you see in the psalmist between the beginning and end of the Daleth stanza?*

*What do you attribute this to?*

*What is the psalmist looking for from God?*

*What are you clinging to that prevents you from clinging fully to God?*

*Do you know anyone (in Scripture or in your own life) who fully clings to God? What does that look like to an outside observer?*

# Week Two: Your Answers in a World of Questions

## Class pages

**Digging Deeper**  
**Clinging to Your Testimonies . . .**  
 What else does God's Word say about clinging?

If you can, spend some time this week digging around for what else God's Word says about clinging throughout the Hebrew word used. See where else it is used and find out what and who people are supposed to cling to.

It is interesting that the psalmist uses the same Hebrew word for clinging to the dust in the beginning of the stanza as he does for clinging to God's testimonies at the end. As human beings, we will cling; the outcome depends on whether we choose wisely and cling to God and His Word.

What things in life do you cling to? Are they pleasing to God? Why/why not?

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 by Susan Cole of Faith 19

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**Notes**  
 How Do You Search for Answers in a World of Questions

**ONE STEP FURTHER:**  
**Clinging to God . . .**  
 There are many people that look with you I love the fact that God doesn't talk to us just in facts and figures (although He gives plenty of those, too, for people who like to know measurements and details). Any other He gives us pictures that walk that way into the life of our being. One of those pictures for me has been the picture of clinging. For many years I had a book in my head called *Clinging to God* and after I wrote that I discovered how Godless through that book, your mind is from my heart to my concept, I considered that concept of clinging to God and I had changed the way I think. Human beings, you see, were never designed to be alone. God wanted us to stay. Adam and Eve were to stay together as husband and wife—a picture of the picture of what our relationship with God is to be.

It is wonderful that so many people find themselves in a really sticky situation and a difficult situation. We tend to be connected, we are to be, in a sense, attached, but we are to be attached to Him? We aren't clinging to God, we are going to cling to something. See some other things and read what God says through the prophet Jeremiah in Jeremiah 1:10-15.

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### Leader notes

What have you learned so far about God's way from "the stanza of the path"?

Are there other "ways" in Scripture that come to mind? (Look for one in Matthew 7.)

We have seen many occurrences of heart thus far (we'll talk more about this in He). How is this reference to heart different? What quality does it speak of?

We see many instances throughout Scripture referencing a whole (complete) heart. This is striking because the psalmist who has already talked about seeking God with the whole heart (Aleph, v. 2 and Beth v. 10) now asks God for more heart (Daleth, v. 32), for increased capacity! A whole heart may walk in God's ways, but a heart God enlarges can run the way of His commandments!

### Additional Teaching:

Consider fleshing out one of the ONE STEP FURTHER boxes on page 32. The first deals with our inability to live the Christian life on our own power; the second looks at biblical examples of prayer God answers. Another possibility is tying in the teaching of Jeremiah on clinging to God with that of the psalmist.

### Live It:

- We will always cling to something. The question is *What will it be?*
- There are two paths and I need to choose the faithful way.
- God strengthens us through His Word.

Notes  
What practical steps can you take to choose God's way and cling to His testimonies today? This week? If you have children, how can you model this to them?

**ONE STEP FURTHER:**  
**Clinging to God . . .**  
There are many pictures that stick with you. I love the fact that God doesn't talk to us just in words and figures (although He gives plenty of those, too, for people who like to know measurements and details). My choice the ones we picture that work best are the ones of our living. One of those pictures for me has been the picture of clinging. For many years, I had stuck to my head about clinging to God and after someone else had learned from Buddha through that book over me. I then my heart to my computer, I considered that concept of clinging a bit and I had thought the way I think. Some things you see, aren't even designed to be shown. But created us to cling. Again and I've seen to cling together as husband and wife—a picture of the picture of what our relationship with God is to be.

It's no wonder that so many people find themselves in a really sticky situation and refuse to leave. We can't be connected, we are in it, in a sense, attached, but we are to be attached to Him. I've seen clinging to God, we are going to do something. See some the bible and read what God says through the prophet Jeremiah in Jeremiah 33:11.

What practical steps can you take to choose God's way and cling to His testimonies today? This week? If you have children, how can you model this to them?

**OBSERVE THE TEXT OF SCRIPTURE**  
READ the He stanza and mark every synonym for the 'Word of God.' When you have done that, record below what you learned from this stanza about God's Word.

**He**

- 33 Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes, and I shall observe it to the end.
- 34 Give me understanding, that I may observe Your law and keep it with all my heart.
- 35 Make me walk in the path of Your commandments, for I delight in it.
- 36 Incline my heart to Your testimonies and not to dishonest gain.
- 37 Turn away my eyes from looking at vanity, and revive me in Your ways.
- 38 Establish Your word to Your servant, as that which produces reverence for You.
- 39 Turn away my reproach which I hated, for Your ordinances are good.
- 40 Behold, I long for Your precepts; revive me through Your righteousness.

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Notes  
What did you learn about the Word of God from the He stanza? Are you beginning to see repeated concepts? If so, what? What about new concepts?

**Who is the focus of this stanza?**

**What specifics does the psalmist pray for, both positively and negatively? Which requests can you relate to the most?**

**It is one thing to observe statutes and keep laws; delighting in commandments, however, is another thing altogether. To what extent do you delight in God's commandments? Explain your response.**

**C.S. LEWIS:**  
**God's Law and the Ideality of the day . . .**  
"But when a law is given 'higher law,' or a better law than in that time, instead of those (angel) writings when the thought of sacred writings, sacred orders, and the books chosen into the law for Israel—his own 'law'—to be turned back to it most have shown with an extraordinary confidence. Further than here, or if that might have not yet, we have not yet a word which is of an ideal quality, because we have plenty of things, but it is by the measure which, the best or the best changes, the only other response."  
—C.S. Lewis in *Reflections on the Pastor*

Sweeter than Chocolate!  
An Inductive Study of Psalm 119

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Leader notes

SEGMENT #5: He (verses 33-40)

[pages 34-36]

Key Talk Point: How can I make my life count?

**Context/Comments:** The He stanza begins with a variation on the phrase “Teach me Your statutes” common in Beth and Daleth. This phrase will repeat throughout the Psalm so keep your eyes opened for it. Note relationships between words that have been occurring throughout the first five stanzas. He is the second consecutive stanza, for instance, where the psalmist asks God for understanding (Daleth, v. 27; He, v. 34). We also see the repeated use of the word life/revive (*chayah* – Gimel, v. 17; Daleth, v. 25; He, vv. 37, 40). Heart is another important word. The psalmist aspires to keep God's law with all of his heart (He, v. 34) and asks God to incline his heart (He, v. 36). In fact, in the first five stanzas, we see seven references to heart. This is not rote and external obedience, this is Old Testament fulfillment of Deuteronomy 6:5-9 at its best.

This stanza also contains Hebrew prefixes that form composite words which may make it difficult for students to identify words. If your students run into trouble, assure them that it has to do with the grammar in the original language. (They can check an interlinear Old Testament if they have one.)

Finally, note that understanding and strengthen are common words between Daleth and He. It's easy to miss strengthen as it is translated “establish” in He.

Discussion Questions:

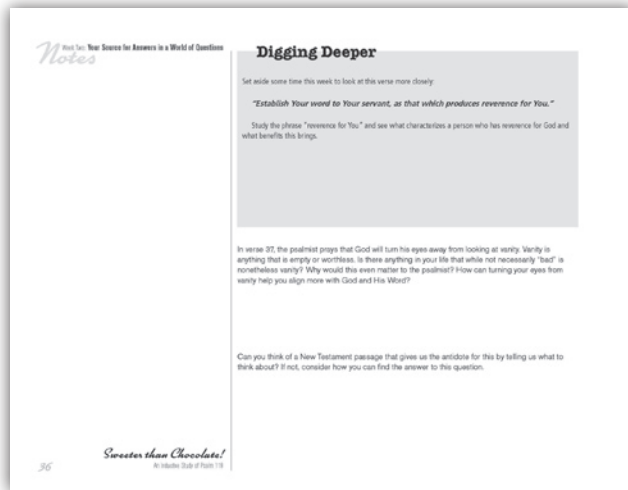
What role does vanity and chasing after vanity play in our culture?

How does this impact a person's ability to live “a life that counts”?

Either in small groups or in a large group read Hebrews 11:1 - 12:3 and discuss the following:

What characterized the people of Hebrews 11?





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## *Leader notes*

*What are we called to do in Hebrews 12, based on their example?*

*What were the people of Hebrews 11 looking for?*

*Where are we to be looking?*

*What effect does looking in the right direction have on our lives?*

*What encumbrances do we need to throw off? Note: encumbrances are not necessarily bad in and of themselves; they are simply things that weigh you down and make your mission less effective . . . things like television, video games, etc. etc.*

If time permits, consider Philippians 4:8-9 and discuss the following:

*What should occupy our minds?*

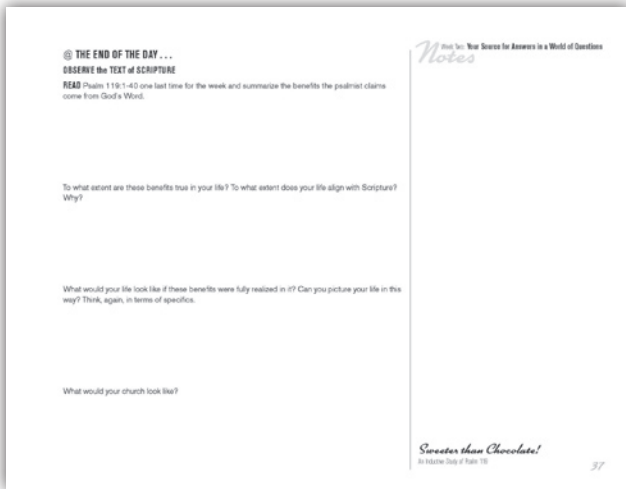
*How well do we do at this?*

*How can we improve?*

*Do you find yourself delighting in God's commandments? Why/why not?*

### **Live It:**

- God can revive us. He is the life giver.
- My heart needs to be inclined toward Him.
- Pursuing vanity will keep me from pursuing God and His purposes.



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*Leader notes*

**SEGMENT #6 SUMMING UP AND LOOKING AHEAD**

*[pages 37-38]*

**Discussion Questions:**

*What key benefits does God's Word claim it provides?*

*How will your life look different this week if you live in light of one of them?*

**Next week:**

Vav – I delight in what I love

Zayin – What I choose to recall from the past will shackle or propel me; principles for dealing with difficult people

Heth – I will become what I continually hang out with

Teth – Understanding the mysterious fruit of affliction

Yodh – If God fashioned us, how can we overlook abortion?

### Summary Thoughts Vav through Yodh:

As you work through this section, help your students focus on some of the recurring concepts, particularly the psalmist's choosing to love God's Word, focus on God's truth, and seek God throughout the hardships of life. Although the psalmist is facing those who reproach him (v. 42), his outlook on life is joyful – he uses words like delight, love, and meditate in conjunction with God's Word. In Zayin he chooses to remember God's Words and by this to comfort himself in the midst of affliction. As he faces opposition, we see him (in the Heth stanza) considering his ways against God's commandments and turning quickly to obedience. No whining from him – he considers and obeys even as the wicked place him in their sights. He is not alone; he has God and is a companion to others who fear God as he does. The Teth stanza provides bedrock truth for all the psalmist's action: God is good and does good. Even affliction, he says, helps him learn God's statutes and walk in His way. Although the arrogant assail him with lies, the psalmist knows that his good God has afflicted (or humbled) him in faithfulness. Because God is faithful and good and does good, the psalmist can live with confidence in His Word . . . and so can we!

*Leader notes*

# Week Three

## The Secret to Delighting in God

### BEFORE CLASS

#### Hot Topics in these Stanzas:

How do we delight in God while living in a fallen world with difficult situations, incorrigible people, and personal affliction to boot? Stanzas six through ten are jam-packed with the answers! Delighting in God comes from loving and following His Word through it all. What does God's way look like in the face of enemies? How does the way we view the past affect the way we handle difficulties today? What role do godly friends play on life's journey? The truth that God is good and does good compels us to delight in God even in the midst of life's afflictions and the continual challenges posed by today's culture.

#### Class-at-a-Glance

Segments	2 Hour Class	1 Hour Class	Topic
Segment 1:	15 min. 15 min.	OMIT 10 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Psalm 119</li> <li>• Review basic concepts</li> <li>• Vav through Yodh overview</li> </ul>
Segment 2:	15 min.	10 min.	Vav - I delight in what I love
Segment 3:	15 min.	10 min.	Zayin - What I choose to recall from the past will shackle or propel me; Principles for dealing with difficult people
Optional Break	10 min.	OMIT	
Segment 4:	15 min.	10 min.	Heth - I will become what I hang out with
Segment 5:	15 min.	10 min.	Teth - Understanding the mysterious fruit of affliction
Segment 6:	20 min.	10 min.	Yodh - If God fashioned us, how can we overlook abortion? Summing up and looking ahead

# Class pages

## Week Three: The Secret to Delighting in God

*Week Three*  
The Secret to Delighting in God

וֵי זַיִן הֵחַ ט יוֹד

Ver Zayin Heth Teth Yodh

Looking at the claims of Psalm 119 is just this side of overwhelming. The psalmist casts such a compelling and appealing vision of life with God's Word, a vision of how things could be, of how they should be. Biblically, anyone who chooses to turn away from such a preferred future has to be a fool. And yet for those who have stumbled in the Word, the psalm is a strange amalgam of desire and despair. After all, how can we account for gaps in our lives—places where our lives do not align with what the Word says should be? What do we make of this? What can we do with this?

The truth of the matter is this: Ever since Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden mankind has had to deal with the problem of gaps. Jesus came to close the gap in the ultimate sense, but we still deal with gaps in the everydayness of life.

So how do we close the gap between what is and what should be? What is to be done and who is to do it? How do we come to love and delight in the Word as the psalmist loves and delights in it? Do we work it up on our own or is there another way?

**AN OVERVIEW OF THE TEXT**

**OBSERVE the TEXT OF SCRIPTURE**

If you have the time, pour a cup of coffee and read through all of Psalm 119. If this doesn't strike you as a delight today, reread the Ver through Yodh verses (Psalm 119:41-65). Like last week, read with an eye toward asking questions of the text, and when you are done spend some time interacting with the questions that follow.

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*Notes*  
Why? The Secret to Delighting in God

**וֵי**  
Ver

41 My Ver loving addresses also come to me, O LORD, Your salvation according to Your word.  
42 So I will have an answer for him who reproaches me, for I trust in Your word.  
43 And do not take the word of truth utterly out of my mouth, for I wait for Your ordinances.  
44 So I will keep Your law continually, forever and ever.  
45 And I will walk at liberty, for I seek Your precepts.  
46 I will also speak of Your testimonies before kings, and shall not be ashamed.  
47 I shall delight in Your commandments, which I love.  
48 And I shall lift up my hands to Your commandments, which I love; and I will meditate on Your statutes.

**זַיִן**  
Zayin

49 Remember the word to Your servant, in which You have made me hope.  
50 This is my comfort in my affliction, that Your word has revived me.  
51 The arrogant utterly despise me, yet I do not turn aside from Your law.  
52 I have remembered Your ordinances from of old, O LORD, and comfort myself.  
53 Burning indignation has kindled me because of the wicked, who forsake Your law.  
54 Your statutes are my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.  
55 O LORD, I remember Your name in the night, and keep Your law.  
56 This has become mine, that I observe Your precepts.

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## Leader notes

### START HERE

### SEGMENT #1: REVIEW

[pages 39-42]

#### Read Psalm 119

#### Review Basic Concepts

#### Review Questions:

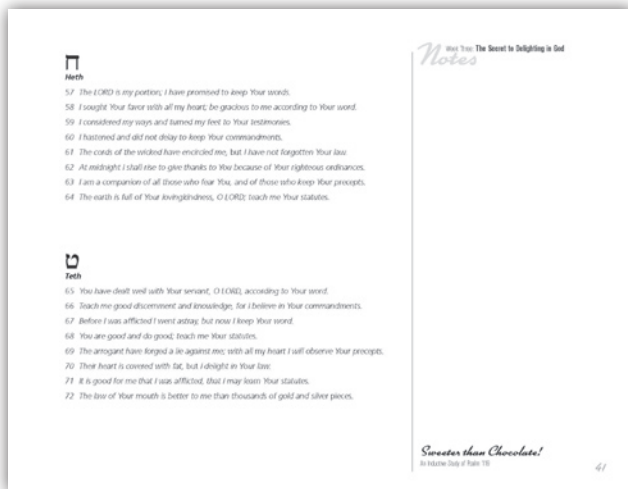
What are some significant facts about Psalm 119?

What kind of Psalm is Psalm 119?

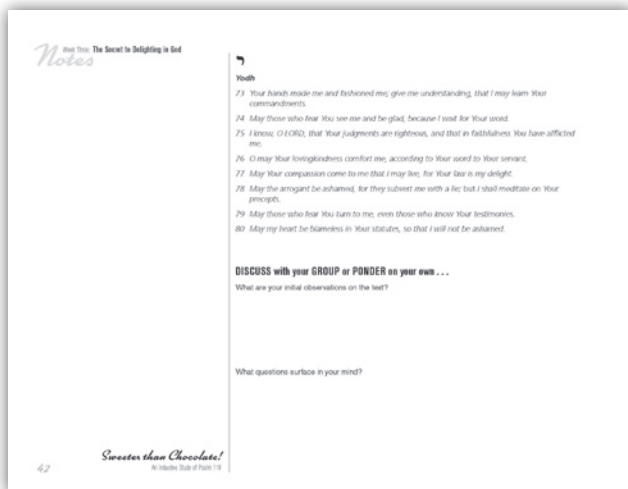
How many stanzas does it have? How many lines per stanza?

If it were in English, how would it be laid out?

Week Three: **The Secret to Delighting in God**  
*Class pages*



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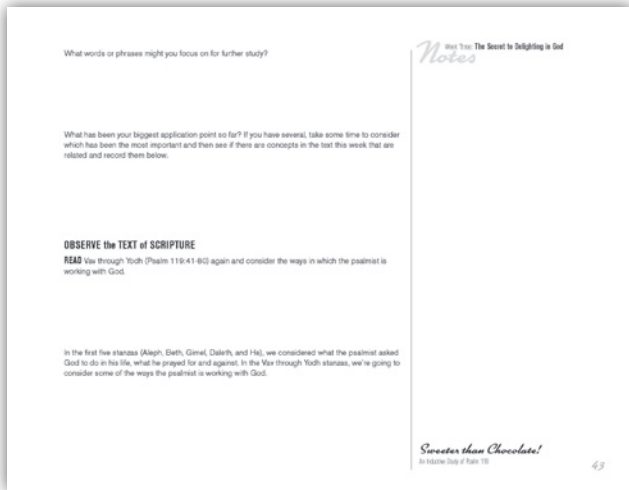
What is the overall theme?

How many synonyms are used for God's Word and what are some of them?

What significant number is associated with this Psalm?

What is the biggest takeaway application you have had thus far?

How would you summarize Aleph through He? Remind students that they looked at what the psalmist prayed for and against.



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*Leader notes*

**Vav through Yodh Overview**

[pages 43-44]

**Discussion Questions:**

*Based on the text, in what ways did you see the psalmist working with God? God benefiting him?*

Your class may use “cooperate” here, but it’s important to remember in the terminology we use that we’re not on the same level God is. We work with God, but we do not work in an equal capacity.

*We invest in a lot of things. How are you at investing with God? Has God impressed on you how you can invest more wisely this week?*

Again, give students the opportunity to wrestle with this application question in small groups or in pauses in the discussion. If God is working in your life on this issue, let them know if it’s appropriate. As you share from your life, authenticity will be key, but you need to be careful with specific details, particularly if they involve family members. Never share specifics if it will dishonor your spouse or children, regardless of how effective you think a particular story is. Authenticity does not mean sharing with reckless abandon. You can share truth without writing a “tell-all”! As a general rule of thumb, I use a degree of specifics when telling stories about myself but ask before sharing about my family. The older the kids get, the more often I find myself saying, “Wait a minute, I can’t share that before I ask.”

We often think about investing more money, but there is no commodity more valuable than our time. You have probably heard it said that you can tell what is truly important to people by looking at their checkbooks and calendars. My calendar just a few years back showed that I was busy, busy, busy trying to do things for God. If there was a committee that I thought was important, I was on it. Of course, I didn’t think I was too busy! I thought I was just being productive for the Kingdom. It took wise people in my life to help me see that I was overbooked . . . and overbooked, even with “good” things that cut into pursuing God’s best! In my zeal, I was pursuing action more than God. Funny, God doesn’t need our overcharged ambition, even if it’s Kingdom ambition. (Some of you know exactly what I’m saying here!) He wants our whole heart focused on Him. So that’s my story of misguided investment to you. What’s yours? Yours to your own students will be more effective than my hand-me-downs. Think about this and share as God leads you.

Remember, this is a great point to break into small groups for discussion to help spur conversation.

# Class pages

## Week Three: The Secret to Delighting in God

**OBSERVE THE TEXT OF SCRIPTURE**  
**READ** the Vav stanza and mark every acronym for the Word of God. Record below what you learned about God's Word from this stanza.

**Vav**

41 May Your lovingkindness also come to me, O LORD, Your salvation according to Your word;  
 42 So I will have an answer for him who reproaches me; for I trust in Your word.  
 43 And do not take the word of truth utterly out of my mouth, for I fear for Your ordinances.  
 44 So I will keep Your law continually forever and ever.  
 45 And I will walk in liberty, for I love Your precepts.  
 46 I will also speak of Your testimonies before kings and shall not be ashamed.  
 47 I will delight in Your commandments, which I love.  
 48 And I shall lift up my hands to Your commandments, which I love; and I will meditate on Your statutes.

**DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .**  
 What did you learn from this stanza about God's Word?

What does this stanza suggest about the psalmist's life situation? What type of people are crossing his path and how does he interact with them?

**Notes**  
 What You: The Secret to Delighting in God

**FYI:**  
**Unplumbable depths . . .**  
 In the writing, the volume of opportunity for study has been liberally measured. In the words, there are only so many words you can meditate, there are only so many words that you can compare, and there are only so many concepts that you can learn and absorb. That said, however, instead of lamenting that we cannot plumb the depths of this stanza, I am learning to rejoice in the fact that we cannot plumb the depths of this passage. In truth, how much we study, or rather how much we meditate and walk, God's Word reveals but not unlearning. In so many ways and times we each learn. I think I can like the psalmist who both loves God's Word and waits for God's Word. When there seems to be too much to do, we must REJOICE in God's Word abundance!

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 An Inductive Study of Psalm 119

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**Notes**  
 What You: The Secret to Delighting in God

**ONE STEP FURTHER:**  
**Continuity . . .**  
 If you have time, look for the word in verse 46 translated "continuity." Note the contexts in which it is often used.

**FYI:**  
**Rahab**  
 In verse 42, the word that is translated as "trust" is the Hebrew word *alah* which generally carries the meaning of walk, trust, or depend. Yes, it is the same word as *elohim*!

**An officer in the rearview mirror . . .**  
 Coming home from my daughter's school piano recital, I had myself being followed by one of Sarah's friends. I wasn't spending all the time and my regulator was on. Something was in my mind that I had forgotten me just at home. No, no, I was driving without my license and proof of insurance. Sarah, you, her regulator was on! I would happen to the public eye. I was not in compliance with the law, and thus, I was not driving at all.  
 The Jewish Publication Society translates Psalm 119:46, "I will walk about at ease, for I have trusted in Your precept." Can I find my license. Can you find that I would have been driving "at ease" with the law in my rearview mirror. I, however, the officer in the car behind me was my father-in-law. He, however, had a relationship with me, unlike what would have been different. Repeating notes of the difference in the world!"

When people reproach you, how do you answer? Do you respond as a person who trusts in the Word? Do people notice that the ways you respond are different from the ways others around you respond? Explain.

In verses 42 through 46, we see some very uncommon pairings of words. How does the psalmist describe his views about God's commandments and precepts in these verses?

How is your outlook similar to or different than that of the psalmist? How does this show up in your behavior?

Can you honestly say with the psalmist, "Lord, I love your commandments"? What is the greatest love of your life? How does God's Word rank in comparison?

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### Leader notes

## SEGMENT #2: Vav (verses 41-48)

[pages 45-48]

### Key Talk Points: I delight in what I love

Answering those who reproach me

**Context/Comments:** Unlike English writers, Hebrew writers have no problem beginning a sentence with "And." In fact, they do it quite often. The word for "and" in Hebrew (often just a prefix) is the letter Vav. Students may find themselves frustrated looking for root words that begin with a Vav prefix. Again, this stanza affords maximum flexibility to the author, not unlike the flexibility an English writer has when he starts a sentence with "The." The Vav stanza marks the first occurrences of God's lovingkindness (*chesed*, v. 41) as the stanza opens and man's love (*ahav*, v. 47-48) in response as the stanza closes. We are also introduced to the concept of waiting (*yachal*, v. 43) on God which, like other words, will be revisited as the Psalm progresses.

### Discussion Questions:

What kind of people does the psalmist have in his life according to the Vav stanza?

How do you answer people who reproach you?

In what kind of situations do believers find reproach today? Is this likely to increase or decrease? Explain.

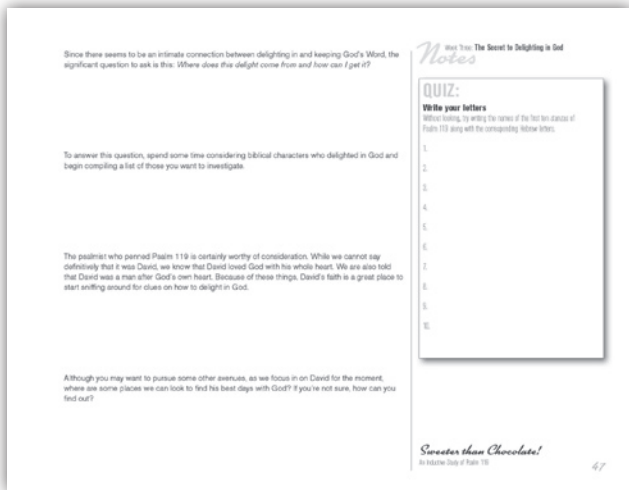
In 2 Timothy 3, Paul tells us that in the last days difficult times will come.

What is the greatest delight, joy, and love of your life BESIDE the Bible? Why?

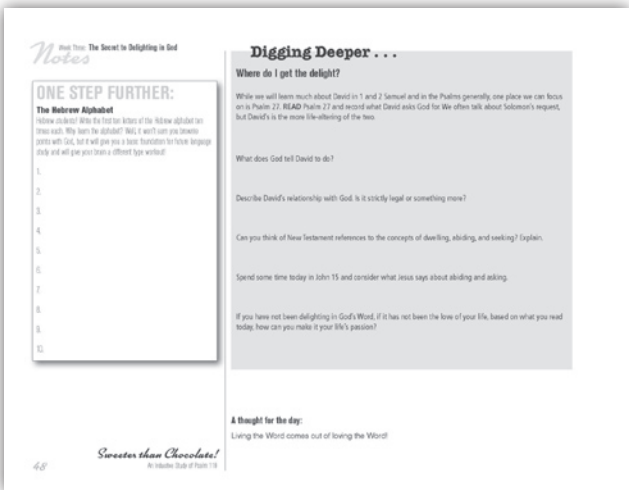
If we don't say "beside the Bible" to start with, we're going to risk strangling the discussion. Some will love God and His Word above all else, but we want people to see the connection between delight and love first so those who are not delighting in God's Word can get the picture from some other relationship in their life.

# Week Three: The Secret to Delighting in God

## Class pages



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### Leader notes

*How does this compare with your love for the Word?*

*What did you learn this week about biblical characters who delighted in God and how they got there?*

*How is aligning out of obligation different from following out of delight? What most characterizes you? Those around you?*

### Additional Teaching:

Your students may come back with an assortment of biblical characters who delighted in God. Let them share how they will apply what they learned. If time allows, you may want to do some additional research on David to show a man who hotly pursued God. Psalm 27 is a great starting text for looking at David's heart.

#### Psalm 27:4-8

- 4 *One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek:  
That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life,  
To behold the beauty of the Lord  
And to meditate in His temple.*
- 5 *For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle;  
In the secret place of His tent He will hide me;  
He will lift me up on a rock.*
- 6 *And now my head will be lifted up above my enemies around me,  
And I will offer in His tent sacrifices with shouts of joy;  
I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the Lord.*
- 7 *Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice,  
And be gracious to me and answer me.*
- 8 *When You said, "Seek My face," my heart said to You,  
"Your face, O Lord, I shall seek."*

We make a big fuss over Solomon asking for wisdom to rule (1 Kings 3:1-15). God was pleased with his request and gave him even more. David, though, was interested in seeking God Himself, not just God's provision to do a job.



# Class pages

Week Three: **The Secret to Delighting in God**

**OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE**  
**READ** the Zayin stanza and mark every synonym for the Word of God. Record below what you learned about God's Word from this stanza.

**↑**  
**Zayin**

49 Remember the word to Your servant, O LORD, for You have made me hope.  
 50 This is my comfort in my affliction, that Your word has revived me.  
 51 The arrogant utterly deride me, yet I do not turn aside from Your law.  
 52 I have remembered Your ordinances from old, O LORD, and comfort myself.  
 53 Morning indignation has seized me because of the wicked, who forsake Your law.  
 54 Your statutes are my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.  
 55 O LORD, I remember Your name in the night, and keep Your law.  
 56 This has become to me, that I believe Your precepts.

**DISCUSS** with your **GROUP** or **PONDER** on your own . . .  
 What did you learn from this stanza about God's Word?

*Notes*  
 What You: The Secret to Delighting in God

**FYI:**  
**David justified by faith**  
 Although David used under the Law, he sought to dwell in God's presence, to work, and to be in relationship with the Lawgiver. Listen to how Paul puts it in the book of Romans 4:1-5: "But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness, but so David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINCE HAVE BEEN COVERED; IN ESSAYS IS THE WINE PRESS, SIN THE LOYAL WILL, BUT THIS NEW ACCOUNT."

**TRUE STORIES:**  
**Moses and Joshua**  
 These two men also followed God with whole hearts. You know this story, that Joshua 24 and consider some of the ways that servant of God is demonstrated in the text.

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*Notes*  
 What You: The Secret to Delighting in God

**FYI:**  
**Comforting myself**  
 One who comforted myself from God's Word refers to my preparation to worry. When I find myself on the fast track toward worry, I stop as best I can and search myself of what God's Word says. Then I receive before I can Matthew 6 where we are encouraged not to worry and when we find that we cannot do a single thing to our help. When I remember these truths, I can comfort myself and by God's grace I can sleep clearly.

**FYI:**  
**In the night . . .**  
 Watch how precious to an who said how much time the psalmist spends in God's Word.

**FYI:**  
**ATTENTION neighborhood consensus!**  
 Are you the smallest neighborhood consensus? Think consensus? Or just the person of your friends come to with the loving voice of their heart? As a, it probably means you're a good listener, which is a good thing. However, it may mean that you're trying to provide the comfort that can only help come from another source. If you're dwelling in God's "repeated heart" keep turning your "heart" back to the Word of God and the God of all comfort instead of continually giving your comfort. Teach them where to find you comfort and how to draw close to the work.

**How does he respond to his situation? Under similar circumstances how would you respond or react? Why?**

**How are the people he refers to treating him?**

**In what kind of circumstances does the psalmist find himself in this stanza?**

**The psalmist talks about comforting himself by remembering God's ordinances of old. How can you comfort yourself using God's Word? If you're thinking generally, shift gears and write down some specifics. Consider a situation in your life where you need comfort and apply God's specific Word to your specific need. If you're finding this tough, don't worry. Play some more and if you need to, call a wise friend to help guide you through it.**

**The psalmist uses the word "remember" three times in the stanza. Why was remembering important to him? What purpose did it serve?**

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 An Inductive Study of Psalm 119

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## Leader notes

### Live It:

- Will I begin to pray like David and seek God's face?
- What practical way can I seek God this week, just for the sake of seeking Him?
- How can I better guard my tongue to answer in a God-honoring way those who reproach?

### SEGMENT #3: Zayin (verses 49-56)

[pages 49-51]

#### Key Talk Points:

- What I choose to recall from the past will shackle or propel me
- Principles for dealing with difficult people
- You can't remember or apply what you didn't learn
- When you remember God's Words, you can comfort yourself and others

**Context/Comments:** This is one stanza where a little Hebrew goes a long way. The stanza letter is "Z" and three of the eight lines begin with the word *zakar* which is Hebrew for "remember." The psalmist first calls on God to remember His word to him (v. 49) and then tells how he has remembered the LORD's ordinances of old (v. 52) and that he calls the LORD's name in the night (v. 55). Prompt your students to watch closely in the next three stanzas for truths that the psalmist remembers including:

Heth (v. 57) - The LORD is my portion

Teth (v. 68) - You are good and do good

Yodh (v. 75) - I know Your judgments are righteous – in faithfulness You have afflicted me

Two other words to take special note of are "comfort" (*nechamah*, v. 50 and *nacham*, v. 52) and "hope" (*yah-cal*, v. 49). The two words translated "comfort" derive from the same Hebrew word (one a noun, the other a verb). Help your students see the connection between remembering the Word of God and comforting oneself and others with it. Closely tied in with this concept is the word "hope" in v. 49. This Hebrew word was first introduced in the Vav stanza where the NASB translates it "wait." "Waiting" is not finger crossing; it's an expectant faith that knows God will come through.



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*Leader notes*

**Discussion Questions:**

*What was your worst test-taking experience during your school years? Why? What happened?*

*What was your best test-taking experience? Why were you able to recall what you needed?*

**ILLUSTRATION:** I will never forget the way one of my favorite professors prayed for his classes on test days: “Lord, I pray that you will give each of my students recall of the material that they have studied.” He wanted us to succeed, but he knew that what has not been learned cannot be recalled. You can’t remember what you did not learn in the first place. You can’t apply or benefit from truths you have not learned. It was true in college and it is true today!

*Observing the text of the Zayin stanza, what words do you see repeated (in addition to synonyms for God’s Word)?*

*How does this stanza characterize the psalmist? Where do you see this in the text?*

Help them to see that he KNOWS, he REMEMBERS, and he APPLIES the Word.

*How can remembering truths about God’s work in the past benefit us today?*

*What happens when we choose to recall wrong things? For example, choosing to wallow in guilt over a sin God has forgiven?*

*Where do you typically turn for comfort? How is this working for you?*

*Leader notes*

*How can you comfort yourself with God's Word? Be specific.*

*Can your comfort to others usurp the role God's Word plays in their lives? How?*

Be careful here. We are to comfort one another. However, we need to make sure that we are always pointing back to God's Word and not creating co-dependent relationships.

**ILLUSTRATION:** This may seem like a very simple example of comforting, but any parent who has had a thumb-sucking child – or seen a thumb-sucking child – will understand. One term that is tossed around frequently in baby circles is that of self-soothing. A baby that self-soothes does not fuss all the time; he or she has figured out how to calm down without outside involvement. I had one of each. My son was not a self-soother. He needed to be held, walked, rocked, taken for a car ride, and more to settle him down. I fed this by trying to provide the comfort. As an infant he never really learned to do it on his own. He couldn't comfort himself and we paid for it in spades over the years with lost sleep. My daughter, however, was born with a magic thumb. Even in ultrasound pictures, we could see her sucking her thumb. When she was born, she did exactly the same thing. She never fussed much at all, she'd just pop her thumb in her mouth, grab her own nose with her little index finger, and she was fine. She could comfort herself – she knew the trick! The psalmist, like my daughter, learned to comfort himself, but his comfort was from God's Word.

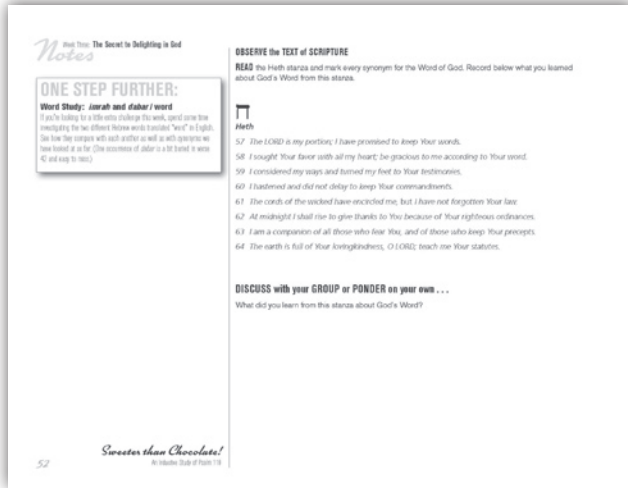
**Additional Teaching:**

You may want to do some additional research on the command repeated throughout Scripture to “remember.” Why do we need to remember? What are we to remember? What are the benefits? How can we do it?

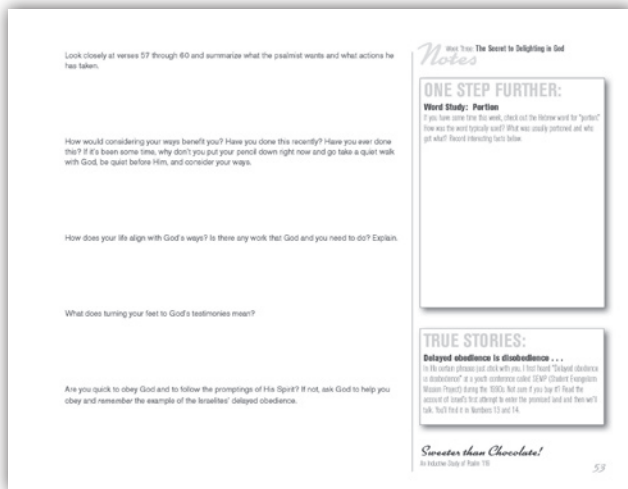
Another possibility is fleshing out the concept *you can't remember what you haven't learned*. Help students see why knowing God's Word is so critical and what concrete steps they can take toward this end.

**Live It:**

- It is critical to diligently learn God's Word so we can remember it.
- When trials come, we must choose to remember how God has worked in the past rather than focus on fears in the present. What specific passage will you choose to remember? Mine is usually Matthew 6!



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*Leader notes*

**SEGMENT #4: Heth (verses 57- 64)**

[pages 52-55]

**Key Talk Points:** I will become what I hang out with  
 Quick obedience

**Context/Comments:** Your students will have fun discovering the initial Hebrew words in the Heth stanza. They are not clouded by prefixes and are relatively easy to identify. Note that seven of the eight initial Heth words (portion, sought, considered, hastened, cords, midnight, companion) occur only once in Psalm 119. Loving-kindness (*chesed*) is a repeated word, but the others are very stanza-specific. This is just one unique feature of the Heth stanza that will make it stand out from the rest and perhaps aid in memory.

As you lead the discussion of this stanza keep in mind the “all in” mentality of the psalmist. We have already seen his strong resolve toward obedience at the outset of the Psalm. As in Aleph, we see the word “keep” (*shamar*) repeated three times (of its total 21 appearances in the Psalm) in one stanza. Help your class see the way the psalmist seeks God, considers his own ways, and then responds quickly in obedience. If your students have done the **Digging Deeper** section, challenge them on how belief and obedience are tied together. The crux of the argument lies in Hebrews 3 where the author of Hebrews shows that unbelief is a form of disobedience. Other texts to consider in this discussion are found in Romans 4 and James 2. We cannot work to save ourselves, but when God saves us through faith in Jesus, our lives will show evidence.

Other topics to address include the role of godly friends and the pursuit of God at all hours, even in the middle of a sleepless night.

**Discussion Questions:**

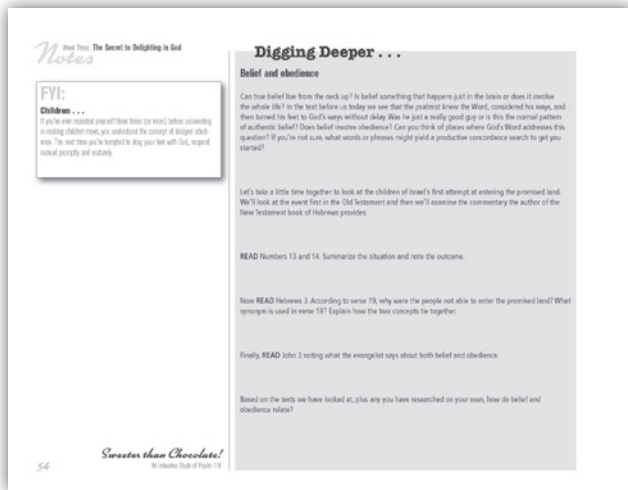
*What major concepts stood out when you observed the Heth stanza?*

*Did students take time this week to purposefully consider their ways? What did you discover?  
 How does your life align with God’s ways?*

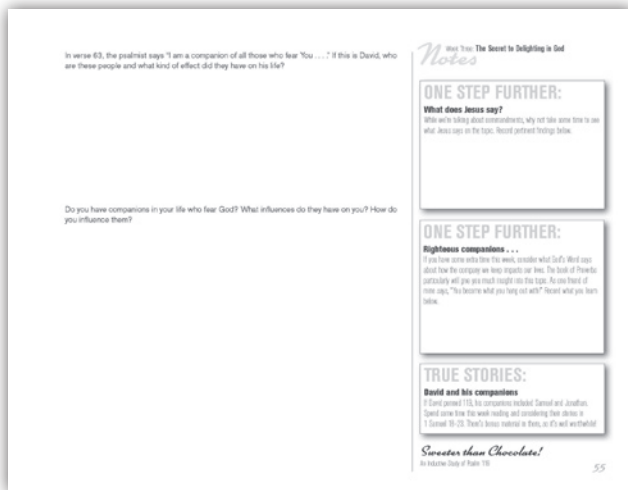
This is a great place to break into small groups if you have the time and critical mass.

# Week Three: The Secret to Delighting in God

## Class pages



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### Leader notes

How important is prompt obedience? Explain.

Discussion will probably go to Numbers 13 and 14.

In considering the **Digging Deeper** section, are belief and obedience connected? Why does this matter? Explain.

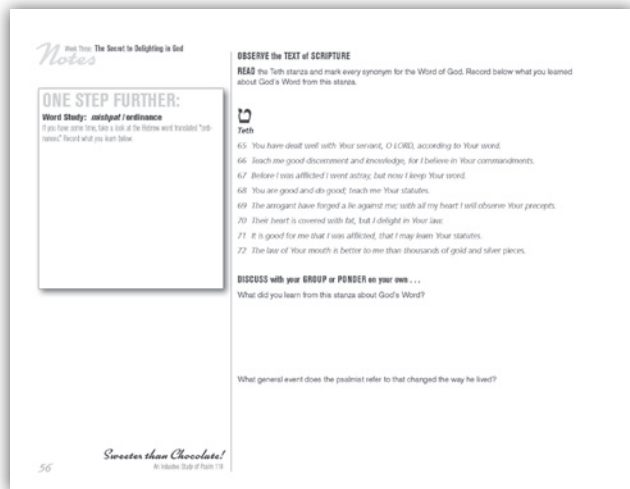
What did you learn this week from the main lesson or sidebars about the influence of godly companions on our lives?

### Additional Teaching:

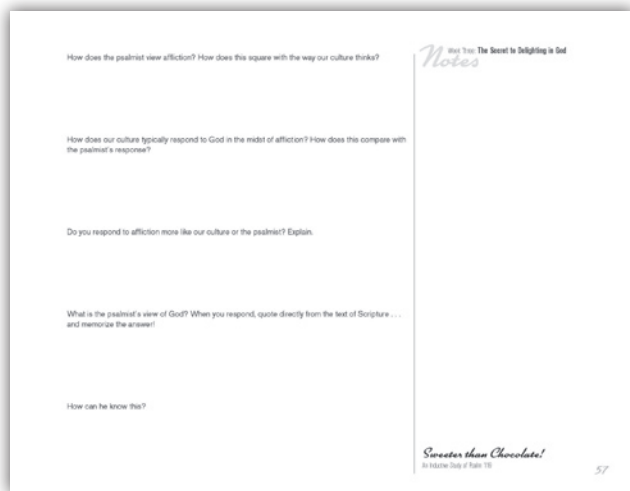
In such a rich stanza there are numerous opportunities for supplemental content. One interesting study is to consider the impact of righteous, god-fearing companions. Germane ones include those in the life of David: Jonathan, Samuel, and Nathan (though others could appropriately be used).

### Live It:

- Seek God, consider your ways, align your life.
- Don't delay obedience.
- Next time you wake up at 2:00 a.m., seek God, not the television.



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*Leader notes*

**SEGMENT #5: Teth (verses 65-72)**

[pages 56-59]

**Key Talk Points:** Understanding the mysterious fruit of affliction  
 God is good and does good

**Context/Comments:** Verse 68 of the Teth stanza contains a bedrock truth recallable by its original readers. “You [LORD] are good and do good.” Why so easy to recall? Teth is one of the “T” stanzas (the other being Tav) and the Hebrew root word for good is *tob*. Although not all show up readily in English, the *tob*ness of this stanza jumps off the page in Hebrew. Forms of the word *tob* show up six times in this stanza, five of them as the initial word of the line (well, v. 65; good, v. 66; good, v. 68; good, v. 71; and better, v. 72). That the psalmist frames God and His Word as good is to be expected. What catches readers off guard, however, is the high value he places on affliction (*anah*) in this context. While *tob* is the word of the hour, pay attention to the following words which cluster in and near the Teth stanza: heart (*leb*) – Heth [v. 58], Teth [vv. 69 and 70], and Yodh [v. 80]; teach/learn (*lamad*) – Heth [v. 64], Teth [vv. 66, 68, and 71]; and afflicted (*anah*) – Teth [vv. 67 and 71] and Yodh [v. 75].

**Discussion Questions:**

*How does a person's view of God affect the way he or she responds to affliction?*

*How easy is it to doubt the truth that God is good and does good? When do doubts come? Why do doubts come?*

*How can we combat attacks on this truth? What other scriptures can we bring to bear? [James 1 is a very good cross-reference for discussion.]*

*Have you ever lived through a storm knowing this truth or watched someone else live it? What did you learn? How did this affect the people who were watching?*



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*Leader notes*

**Additional Teaching:**

This is a great time to engage your students in the **Digging Deeper** section about Knowing God. As a teacher, one skill that is important to hone is the ability to weave teaching in with discussion. Every discussion leader does this to a degree. If you have time this week, think about developing material for this section that you will *present* in a discussion format. That is different than simply following the flow of a discussion. Ask questions that help your students reason through the material you are presenting and which draw out and integrate what your students have learned with the material you are sharing. Again, this is an optional part of the lesson to do as time permits.

Other Scriptures to investigate include James 1; Romans 8:28ff; Hebrews 12.

**Live It:**

- Actively seek God with a learner's heart in the midst of whatever affliction you are facing.
- When tempted to get angry at God or circumstances, remember that God is good and does good in all things. Even in bad circumstances, He redeems and does His work. Begin watching for His goodness instead of whining.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Memories are made of water. So much of how we view life has to do with paradigms and grids we view life through. When your grid is truth – God is good and does good – you will see life differently; you will see God's goodness even when the world sees only darkness. In my family, we have a saying that has changed one of our paradigms. It may sound silly, but it really alters our view. It goes like this: Memories are made of water. This Gillaspie ditty began years ago when I was far too pregnant with my second child and had taken my firstborn, then four years old, to our local amusement park. Although I saw the storm clouds rolling in, I crumbled and let Brad take "one more ride" on the airplanes. During the plane ride, the skies opened the likes of which I'm sure the world hasn't seen since Noah – no joke. We bolted for cover and waited in a restaurant hoping for the storm to pass. It didn't. Finally, I said, "Okay Brad, the water is not going to make us melt . . . let's make a run for it (as much a run as a pregnant woman and a four-year old can make!). So we made our way out of the park, drenched to the skin. Since we were soaking anyway, we stomped in puddles and had a grand time. We bought some sealed, blue cotton candy and splashed our way to the parking lot. We actually made a great memory out of what could have been a disastrous day. Thinking back on the day, I realized something else that led to the motto. Many days simply run together, but the rain on that day set it apart. It became memorable, it was not just another day. Now when it rains, instead of wallowing in the wetness, we see it as an opportunity to look for a way to rejoice. Rain doesn't have to ruin a day, it can make a day wonderfully memorable if you're looking for the cloud's silver lining. It has everything to do with your paradigm.

To start with the truth that God is good and does good is exponentially more powerful because it is not just an opinion; it is fact. When we align ourselves with truth and look at life through that grid, we are able to stand in the midst of life's true storms.

*Notes* What You: The Secret to Delighting in God

**OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE**  
**READ** the Yodh stanza and mark every acronym for the Word of God. Record below what you learned about God's Word from this stanza.

**Yodh**

73 Your hands made me and fashioned me; give me understanding, that I may learn Your commandments.  
 74 May those who fear You see me and be glad, because I trust in Your word.  
 75 Fearful; O LORD, that Your judgments are righteous, and that in faithfulness You have afflicted me.  
 76 O may Your lovingkindness comfort me, according to Your word to Your servant.  
 77 May Your compassion come to me that I may live, for Your law is my delight.  
 78 May the arrogant be ashamed, for they subvert me with a lie; but I shall meditate on Your precepts.  
 79 May those who fear You turn to me, even those who know Your testimonies.  
 80 May my heart be blameless in Your statutes, so that I will not be ashamed.

**What does God require?**  
 "Now, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and to keep the LORD's commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good?"  
 Deuteronomy 10:12-13

**DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own ...**  
 What did you learn from this stanza about God's Word?

What actions does the psalmist attribute to God in the first three verses of the stanza?

*Sweeter than Chocolate!*  
 An Inductive Study of Psalm 119

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*Notes* What You: The Secret to Delighting in God

**ONE STEP FURTHER:**  
**Word Study: Afflicted**  
 Take some time to investigate the Hebrew word translated "afflict." If the psalmist has been afflicted, what negative in the stanza does this word mean? Record your findings below.

What does the psalmist ask for in this stanza? Does he think God will answer him? Why/why not?

Does the psalmist's no-nonsense view on affliction surprise you? Is it simplistic or does it make sense considering the context of the Psalm so far? Explain.

Look closely at verse 77. Although the psalmist delights in God's law, meditates on it, and seeks to keep it, what is it that causes him to live? Is it his law-keeping or something else? Explain.

Read the Yodh stanza again and consider what the psalmist thinks is worse than being afflicted. How does affliction relate to this worse situation?

Do people in our culture prefer to be afflicted or ashamed? How does this reflect the state of our souls? What does it say about our view of God?

*Sweeter than Chocolate!*  
 An Inductive Study of Psalm 119

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*Leader notes*

**SEGMENT #6 Yodh (verses 73-80)**

*[pages 60-62]*

**Key Talk Point:** If God fashioned us, how can we overlook abortion?

**Context/Comments:** The letter Yodh is thought to be related to the Hebrew word *yad* or hand. Again we have a very Hebrew way of remembering content as the stanza opens up with *yad* and the idea of God's hands making and fashioning the psalmist. Continuing the concept of "affliction" from the Teth stanza, the psalmist now says that the LORD afflicted him in faithfulness (v. 75). Recall that in Teth he said "Before I was afflicted I went astray" (v. 67) and "It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes" (v. 71). The psalmist seems to view shame as a worse condition than affliction. Note also in this stanza the repeated phrase "those who fear You" in verses 74 and 79 (and previously in v. 63). There is a clear division between two kinds of people: arrogant liars and those who fear the LORD. The psalmist has already called himself a companion of those who fear the LORD in verse 63. Now he prays that they will both see his example, be glad, and turn to him.

**Discussion Questions:**

*What did the psalmist say is worse than affliction and why?*

*Do you agree? Explain.*

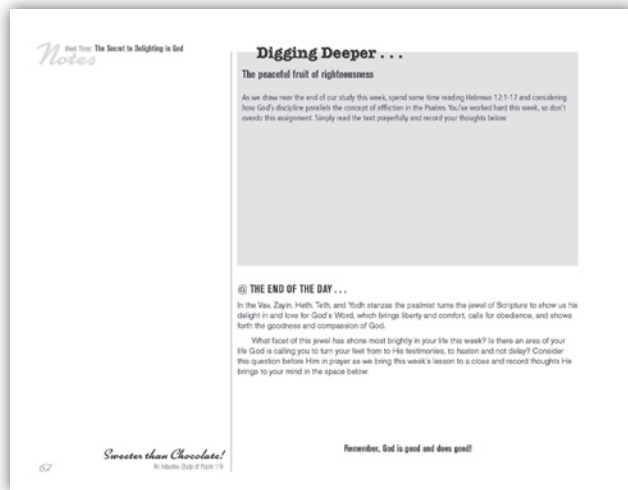
*Based on Teth and Yodh, what are the up sides of affliction?*

*Did you notice two distinct groups in this stanza? Who are they and how would you describe them?*



# Week Three: **The Secret to Delighting in God**

## Class pages



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### Leader notes

What does this psalmist say about “those who fear [the LORD]”? What does he pray for them?

When your companions see you doing life can they look at you and be glad? Explain. Why is this important?

### Additional Teaching:

With the reference to God making and fashioning the psalmist, this stanza opens the door to a frank discussion on the beginning of life and the subsequent issue of abortion. This is an extremely important topic to deal with as so many women (and men!) today carry guilt and remorse over babies they aborted 10, 20, 30 years ago. If you decide to broach this topic, do it with much prayer and compassion and be sure to extend compassion early and often. This area of buried sin and guilt plagues many inside the Church today. Also be prepared to offer referrals to professional Christian counselors for those in need.

### Live It:

- When affliction comes, I will remember the benefit it can work in my life.
- I will consider specific ways I can encourage others by my behavior and life.

### Next week:

Kaph - How do I learn to wait on God in trying times?

Lamed - The secret to standing firm – God’s Word is settled in heaven

Mem - A word sweeter than chocolate; a word that makes me wise!

Nun - Learning to walk in the light I have

### Summary Thoughts Kaph through Nun:

The stanzas we're looking at this week start in the dark and end in the light. Take your students back to where we left off last week and help them see that whereas Yodh exhibited hopeful waiting, the Kaph stanza has a more desperate tone, perhaps the most desperate of the entire Psalm. Still, in the midst of persecution and waiting, the psalmist prays for revival as he holds fast to God and His Word. Lamedh opens with another bedrock truth that holds the psalmist: God's Word is settled in heaven – forever! Although afflicted and waiting, the psalmist will never forget this timeless and unchanging Word. The revival the psalmist prays for in Kaph we see realized in Lamedh. As we arrive at Mem and Nun, the psalmist still refers to enemies and intense affliction, but his mood has changed. Mem teems with delight and love for the Word of God that brings the psalmist wisdom, insight, and pleasure. In Nun the psalmist encounters immense peril – his life continually in jeopardy. In the midst of the darkest night, God's Word gives Him light for his path and brings joy. Thus, the psalmist will forever follow God's forever Word.

### Leader notes

# Week Four

## Are You Standing Firm in an Unsteady Culture?

### BEFORE CLASS

#### Hot Topics in these Stanzas:

How do we survive, much less thrive, in a culture where the only constant is change? The middle stanzas of Psalm 119 prescribe a course of action based on the stability of a sovereign God whose Word is settled . . . forever! Because God's Word is firm, we can stand even when our emotions fall. Because God's Word is powerful, it can make us wiser than our enemies and teachers. Because God's Word gives light, it can illuminate the next step on life's path. Can it do the job? Of course! The only question is, Will we let it?

#### Class-at-a-Glance

Segments	2 Hour Class	1 Hour Class	Topic
Segment 1:	15 min. 15 min.	OMIT 10 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Psalm 119</li> <li>• Review basic concepts</li> <li>• Aleph through Yodh overview</li> </ul>
Segment 2:	15 min.	10 min.	Kaph - How do I learn to wait on God in trying times?
Segment 3:	15 min.	10 min.	Lamed - The secret to standing firm – God's Word is settled in heaven
Optional Break	15 min.	OMIT	
Segment 4:	15 min.	10 min.	Mem - A word that is sweeter than chocolate; A word that makes me wise!
Segment 5:	15 min.	10 min.	Nun - Learning to walk in the light I have
Segment 6:	15 min.	10 min.	Summing Up and Looking Ahead

# Week Four: Are You Standing Firm in an Unsteady Culture?

## Class pages

*Notes* Not for: Are You Standing Firm in an Unsteady Culture?

### Week Four

#### Are You Standing Firm in an Unsteady Culture?

ק Lamedh Mem Nun

Although affliction and persecution follow the psalmist, his tenacious hold on the Word of God produces staggering results. Not only does the Word he so loves bring comfort and reveal to his soul during the course of his trials, it also brings unwielded wisdom that can only be attributed to a divine instructor. The Word lights his path and is the love of his life and the joy of his heart. Can we get the same monumental results the psalmist did? Can you imagine what life will look like when the Word is truly sweeter than chocolate to us? Imagine what our lives will look like when His love is our medication all day. Let's consider these possibilities as we open our study today!

**AN OVERVIEW OF THE TEXT**

**OBSERVE the TEXT OF SCRIPTURE**

As we begin today, take time to read through the text we have studied so far and consider the ways God's Word has been working during your time in the Psalms.

**READ** Psalm 119:91-112, the Kaph, Lamedh, Mem and Nun stanzas, again making initial observations of the text and beginning to identify questions you think we may want to pursue. Remember, engage us in all about asking questions and there is no such thing as a dumb question. Soon you'll find that asking questions as you read interacting with the text is second nature to you. Like everything else though, it will take a little time.

*Sweeter than Chocolate!*  
In Hebrew 119 of Psalm 119

page 63

*Notes* Not for: Are You Standing Firm in an Unsteady Culture?

ק Kaph

81 My soul languishes for Your salvation; I wait for Your word.  
82 My eyes fail with longing for Your word, until I say, "When will You comfort me?"  
83 Though I have become like a jackdaw in the smoke, I do not forget Your statutes.  
84 How many are the days of Your servants! When will You execute judgments on those who persecute me?  
85 The arrogant have dug pits for me, men who are not in accord with Your law.  
86 All Your commandments are faithful; they have persecuted me with a lie; help me!  
87 They almost destroyed me on earth, but as for me, I did not forsake Your precepts.  
88 Revive me according to Your lovingkindness, so that I may keep the testimony of Your mouth.

ל Lamedh

89 Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.  
90 Your faithfulness continues throughout all generations; You established the earth, and it stands.  
91 They stand this day according to Your ordinances, for all things are Your servants.  
92 If Your law had not been my delight, then I would have perished in my affliction.  
93 I will never forget Your precepts, for by them You have revived me.  
94 I am Yours, save me; for I have sought Your precepts.  
95 The wicked wait for me to destroy me; I shall diligently consider Your testimonies.  
96 I have seen a sign to all perfection; Your commandment is exceedingly broad.

**QUIZ:**  
Open book if you need it!  
Without looking, by writing the name of the list on the cover of Psalm 119 with the corresponding Hebrew letter.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

*Sweeter than Chocolate!*  
In Hebrew 119 of Psalm 119

page 64

## Leader notes

### START CLASS HERE

#### SEGMENT #1: REVIEW

[pages 63-65]

#### Read Psalm 119

#### Review Basic Concepts

#### Review Questions:

What are some significant facts about Psalm 119?

What kind of Psalm is Psalm 119?

How many stanzas does it have? How many lines per stanza?

If it were in English, how would it be laid out?

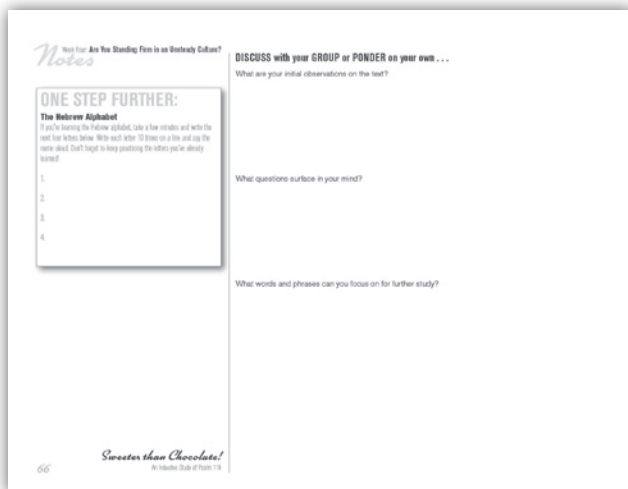
What is the overall theme?

How many synonyms are used for God's Word and what are some of them?

Week Four: **Are You Standing Firm in an Unsteady Culture?**  
*Class pages*



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*Leader notes*

What significant number is associated with this Psalm?

What is the biggest takeaway application you have had thus far?

**Kaph through Nun Overview:**

*[pages 66-68]*

**Discussion Questions:**

What were your initial observations of the text?

As you ask your students this question, listen carefully to their answers and ask follow-up questions to help them reason through the text or identify their questions more clearly.

If they identify questions, ask them how they can find the answers and why the questions are important.

If they identify words for further study, ask them why the word piqued their interest and how they will follow up.

What was the overall mood? How did it change over the stanzas we looked at?

Week Four: **Are You Standing Firm in an Unsteady Culture?**  
*Class pages*

Has your thinking changed since you have been studying the Psalm? What about your behavior? Are these areas God is connecting you to, but you're resisting? If so, take a few minutes and jot those areas down. If you're not comfortable putting them here, write them down on a separate piece of paper, just get them in front of your eyes and out of the recesses of your brain. Also see if you can identify why you are disobeying, is it fear? Pride? Something else? Sometimes looking at an issue in black and white helps us obey.

*Notes*  
 Note for Are You Standing Firm in an Unsteady Culture?

**OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE**  
**READ** Kaph through Nun (Psalm 119:81-112) again. This time compile two simple lists. In one, record the objective benefits of the Word. In the other, list the subjective feelings the psalmist has about the Word. Here are a couple to get you started.

OBJECTIVE	SUBJECTIVE
v. 88 All Your commandments are faithful	v. 92 The law is the psalmist's delight

*Sweeter than Chocolate!*  
 An Inductive Study of Psalm 119

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page 67

*Notes*  
 Note for Are You Standing Firm in an Unsteady Culture?

**ONE STEP FURTHER:**  
**"I do believe; help my unbelief!"**  
 Back to what the second group assessed, express the heart of the struggle between belief and unbelief in a passage about a father and his storm-possessed son. The passage provides clues for the seeds of those who feel themselves fighting to believe. You can read the story in Mark 9:14-23.

**FYI:**  
**Do what's a paragon?**  
 "Paragon" is defined as "a good model or example," selected from a book," according to Merriam-Webster. Paragons can be used to talk about actions of courage. They aren't just paragon in your faith, recorded by feelings and pictures of fear with a choice. Why do you need to know the word? You don't, but if you start making scholarly comparisons it's a piece of paper that you will eventually use.

Looking over the lists you've compiled, have you experienced the subjective feelings of the psalmist? Are you beginning to see the Word as sweeter than chocolate or would you honestly rather have a Dove bar? Explain.

If you resonate with the psalmist there is a very high likelihood you believe the objective claims he makes as well. If you can't relate to the feelings, take some time to closely look at the objective claims and see if there is any area in which you are struggling to take God at His Word. Don't blast by this too quickly. Ever since the Garden, the adversary has been whispering in our ears, "Has God said?" and many of us let that insidious voice of doubt slide in more often than we'd like to admit. But if we're aware of his tactics we're more able to stand firm. So if you have a hard time with any of the objective statements, write them down and make them a matter of prayer between you and God. (e.g. Do I believe His Word can rescue me? Do I believe His Word is verified in the heavens?, etc.)

If you need to do any alignment business with God, take some time for that now. Write a prayer or go for a walk and talk it over with Him. Either way, take some time to be quiet in His presence.

*Sweeter than Chocolate!*  
 An Inductive Study of Psalm 119

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page 68

*Leader notes*

Make sure your students answer from the text of Scripture. As they do, help them see how the psalmist maintains his stability even as his moods and emotions change.

Again, if your group is shy, consider breaking into small groups and then bringing the conversation back to the large group to compare answers.

**Discussion Questions (cont.):**

*In the assignment on page 67, what objective benefits did you see in Kaph through Nun? How do these relate to emotions the psalmist has with respect to the Word? Or do they?*

*Do I believe the objective statements? As a group do we believe the objective statements or do we give mental assent with a resistant or unconvinced heart? What can we do about this?*

Week Four: **Are You Standing Firm in an Unsteady Culture?**  
*Class pages*

**OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE**  
**READ** the Kaph stanza and mark every acronym for the Word of God. When you have done that, record below what you learned from this stanza about God's Word.

**Kaph**

81 My soul languishes for Your salvation; I wait for Your word.  
 82 My eyes fail with longing for Your word, while I say, "When will You comfort me?"  
 83 Though I have become like a wrenbird in the smoke, I do not forget Your statutes.  
 84 How many are the days of Your servant? When will You execute judgment on those who persecute me?"  
 85 The arrogant have dug pits for me, men who are not in accord with Your law.  
 86 All Your commandments are faithful; they have persecuted me with a lie, help me!  
 87 They almost destroyed me on earth, but as for me, I did not forsake Your precepts.  
 88 Revive me according to Your lovingkindness, so that I may keep the testimony of Your mouth.

**DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .**  
 What did you learn from this stanza about God's Word?

*Notes*  
 Next for Are You Standing Firm in an Unsteady Culture?

**ONE STEP FURTHER:**  
**Questioning God**  
 The psalmist asks God several questions in this stanza. How do you take care of these questions with a right question and what examples do we have in Scripture? What can we learn from them?

**CONSIDER THIS:**  
**Forgetting and forsaking**  
 What does it mean to forget and forsake? How do we do this? How do we avoid it? How do we remember God and His ways? The psalmist does neither. Do you want one of these things when it is troubling you? Being obedient to God will not only require us to forget our troubles and worries, but to know when to go in (God's Word) to fight our fleshly impulses and reactions. My tendency is to worry. How do we avoid the danger of "forgetting God" because we know that about myself, I spend a lot of time meditating on passages like Matthew 6.

*Sweeter than Chocolate!*  
 An Inductive Study of Psalm 119

page 69

*Notes*  
 Next for Are You Standing Firm in an Unsteady Culture?

**FVI:**  
**Wrenbird in the smoke . . .**  
 We use the term "wrenbird" to refer to a small bird that is often found in the smoke of a fire. In the Kaph stanza, it's pretty obvious that being a wrenbird in smoke is not a good thing. In situations like this, often someone brings more complete light to the dark.

The following is an entry on the wrenbird from a resource book entitled *The Wilderness and Customs of the Bible* that is one of the excellent resources available at Logos Bible Software.

"Other models of animal skins were often hung in tents and other places where they were subject to the deteriorating action of the smoke from cook and camp fires. In some cases, skins of wild animals were deliberately hung in the smoke to give the tent a peculiar flavor. Other skins before being hung to smoke, they became black, hard, and almost good for nothing. That is the sense of the figure of speech in our text verse."

-James M. Freeman & Harold J. Chabot in *The Wilderness and Customs of the Bible*

What is the psalmist's situation in the Kaph stanza? What is he experiencing?

How does the psalmist respond and/or react? Explain.

What questions does the psalmist ask God?

Do you relate with the psalmist's frame of mind in this stanza? Explain.

*Sweeter than Chocolate!*  
 An Inductive Study of Psalm 119

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*Leader notes*

**SEGMENT #2: Kaph (verses 81-88)**

[pages 69-74]

**Key Talk Points:** How do I learn to wait on God in trying times?  
 How do I endure when persecuted with lies?

**Context/Comments:** *Kalah*. If you're looking for a way to remember this stanza, look no further. This Kaph word appears three times in the stanza and is translated "languishes" (v. 81), "fail" (v. 82), and "destroyed" (v.87) by the NASB. *Kalah* is a word of completion that can be used in a positive or negative sense. Here we see the negative as the psalmist is used up and nearly done. The simple way to remember this stanza is asking the one-word question "When?" (*mathay*). We see phrases from Yodh repeated with more intensity in Kaph. Note the differences in the context of "I wait for your word" (v. 74 / v. 81). The prayer for "comfort" (*nacham*) in Yodh (v. 76) has become a questioning cry of "When will you comfort me?" in Kaph (v. 82). *Radaph*, "persecute," appearing twice in this stanza, is another word you may want to explore more fully. While the psalmist is being persecuted with lies from the mouths of men, he keeps the testimony of the mouth of God.

**Discussion Questions:**

Even if you're not a "small group," you may want to break smaller for a few minutes to let more people discuss and be heard as this will elicit responses from all but the most reserved students.

*Have you ever asked God "How long?" Explain.*

*From the text, describe things happening in the psalmist's life.*

*How does "regular" affliction or hardship differ from being persecuted with lies?*

Week Four: **Are You Standing Firm in an Unsteady Culture?**  
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We see that the psalmist is being persecuted by a lie. How do you respond differently to persecutions based on truth or lies? Explain your answer.

Have you ever been persecuted with a lie? How did you handle it?

What can you do when a lie is prevailing against you? Can you think of examples from Scripture or instructions when we are faced with this type of situation? Explain.

*Notes*  
**Notes for Are You Standing Firm in an Unsteady Culture?**  
**FYI:**  
**Standing firm in the sand of culture**  
 With our culture's relative instability, it's increasingly important for people to know truth. We can only do this by remembering God's desires and willing to forsake the people.

*Sweeter than Chocolate!*  
 An Inductive Study of Psalm 119 71

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*Notes*  
**Notes for Are You Standing Firm in an Unsteady Culture?**

**ONE STEP FURTHER:**  
**Word Study: Languishes**  
 If you know an additional thing, do some digging in the word "languish" in verse 6. Record what you learn and tell the other two words in the class from the same Hebrew root.

What actions does the psalmist take in his dire situation?

What have you learned from the Kaph stanza that you can apply to your own life situation? If you're thinking in generalities, try to narrow your focus to a specific situation and response.

**Digging Deeper . . .**  
**From the pit to the palace**  
 The psalmist who so loved the Torah undauntedly wrestled with Joseph, a young man who was thrown into a pit and persecuted with lies but who God eventually delivered in a miraculous way.  
 Let's take some time today and examine the life of this man who faced immense trials and came out on top (okay, second to the top).  
**READ** the account of Joseph in Genesis 37 and 39-41. For the whole story, read through chapter 50. As you read, answer the following questions:  
 How many people came against Joseph? Who were they and how did they come against him?

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 An Inductive Study of Psalm 119 72

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*Leader notes*

How does the psalmist stand in this state of desperation? How can you stand?

**My ILLUSTRATION:** Katie and her kidneys

You will probably have a great illustration (or two!) of your own about waiting in hard circumstances. God has a way of refining His people that way. God has taught me much over the years through different schools of waiting. Probably the most significant extended wait had to do with my daughter who had kidney problems as a toddler and young child. Unlike the psalmist, I didn't endure persecution, but we lived for years with a chronic condition that always threatened her health and caused (dare I say forced?) me to live out my belief in the sovereignty of God. Katie's health issues forced me to realize that I was not ultimately in control and that I could do nothing but wait on God – His timing and resolution. Did I like those years? No! Would I change them? No! I learned far too much about His faithfulness and sovereignty.

**Your ILLUSTRATION:**

Week Four: **Are You Standing Firm in an Unsteady Culture?**  
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Notes

What authority did those who came against Joseph hold?

How many times was Joseph saved from death? READ the story of Potiphar's wife carefully. Consider what would normally happen to a slave who attempted to rape his master's wife. Explain.

What types of deception and/or evil practices were used against Joseph? How did he respond to the continued injustice?

What was God doing in all of this? If you have read through chapter 50, what did Joseph say?

**TRUE STORIES:**  
**Persecution and gifts . . .**  
 Think for a few minutes of other biblical characters who experienced severe persecution. If time came to mind, how can you find them?  
 If you need a companion for the word "yet" and "but" every other thing the accounts of Joseph and Jeremiah, if you have some time today, read about Jeremiah and his job in Jeremiah 18. Record your thoughts below.

**FYI:**  
**Name:** Joseph  
**Occupation:** Egyptian  
**Script Reference:** Joseph (the Southern Kingdom)  
**Reference:** The Weeping Prophet  
**Interesting Fact:** Jeremiah prophesied about the fall of Jerusalem in 605 BC and had to witness it.

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Notes

What have you learned about God from this account?

List some practical applications from the account of Joseph you can apply in your life today.

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*Leader notes*

**Additional Teaching:**

For additional teaching this week consider reviewing the **Digging Deeper** section on Joseph for those who have not studied it. Students who have completed the work will end up being your co-teachers in the process – and they may not even know! If you have potential teachers in the group, you may want to invite one of them to present what he or she learned about waiting from the life of Joseph. Give the person adequate advance notice to share for between 5 and 10 minutes. Offer your assistance, be available, but let the leash out as much as possible. This is a great way to let people “try on” teaching without committing to leading a whole class. And for us teachers, it is a way to begin not only entrusting to but also helping the faithful learn how to teach others!

Just a quick aside here. The longer we teach, the more intentional we need to be about multiplying. Why? Here's my opinion. When we love what we do, we are often slow to give it away. Think about it. The more we teach, the more we love teaching; the more we really don't want someone else to teach in our place. A lot of fears can enter: *What if the person is terrible?* or worse yet *What if the person is better than I am?* Those who love to teach and are honest with themselves know exactly what I'm saying. The remedy: Entrust to faithful men, fix your eyes on Jesus, and let Him sort everything out. There really is nothing more satisfying than watching those you have brought along go out to teach others!

**Live It:**

- Waiting in dire circumstances. Where will I focus?
- Standing in the face of lies and persecution. How will I respond?



**SEGMENT #3: Lamedh (verses 89-96)**

*[pages 75-82]*

**Key Talk Point:** The secret to standing firm – God’s Word is settled in heaven

**Context/Comments:** The contrast between the ephemeral suffering of Kaph and the forever stability of God’s Word in the Lamedh stanza is striking. As bad as affliction and persecution get, the psalmist stands on the settled Word of God. Watch the words of permanence and stability that cluster in these stanzas: “faithful/faithfulness” (*emunah*) in Yodh (v. 75), Kaph (v. 86), and Lamedh (v. 90) and the “forever” (*olam*) word that shows up twice in Lamedh (vv. 89 and 93) and then in Mem (v. 98) and Nun (vv. 111 and 112). Although the arrogant attempt to destroy him on earth (v. 87), the psalmist is in relationship with the One who established the earth and whose Word is settled – forever!

This stanza is another one that will give fits to students looking for Lamedh line-start words. The Lamedh words in this stanza are predominantly prefixed with prepositions. They’ll be able to find words with some but not all tools. Again, tell them, “No sweat!” . . . it is an opportunity for another day! If they get frustrated enough, suggest biblical Hebrew classes.

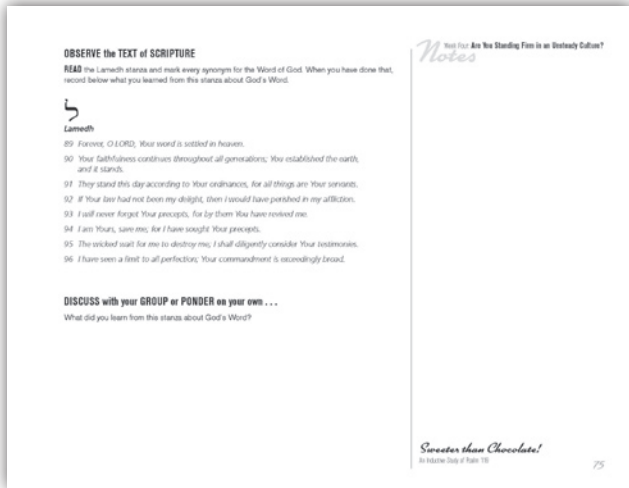
**Discussion Questions:**

*What differences did you notice moving from Kaph to Lamedh? What is the basis of increased hope?*

*How much difference does stability make? In a family? In a country? In a culture? In a life?*

*What are examples of unstable objects people cling to?*

*What kinds of results can we expect (or have we seen firsthand) from looking for stability in the wrong objects? Can you think of any scriptural examples? [House on the sand parable in Matthew 7? Various kings who trusted in horses and chariots?]*

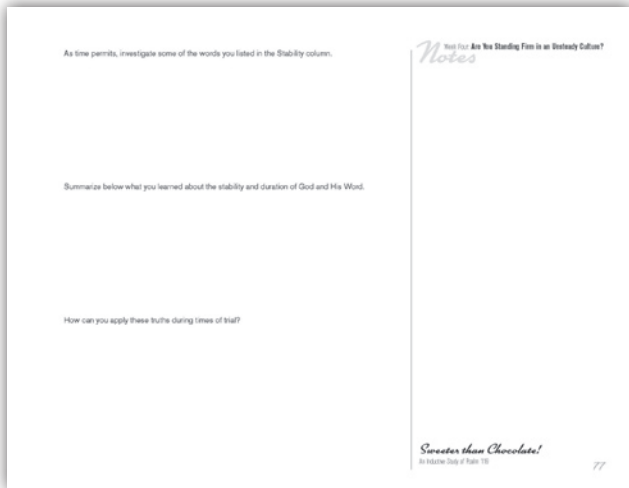


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Week Four: **Are You Standing Firm in an Unsteady Culture?**  
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*Leader notes*

Our lesson focused on God as the source of stability in times of trial. What about during "normal" times? In what ways do we heap impossible responsibility on other human beings? Spouses? Friends? Siblings? Parents?

Do we harm others when we allow them to look to us as their "rock"?

What did you learn about God in this stanza that can help you turn to Him for all your stability needs?

**ILLUSTRATION:** A Settled Word

A recurring thinking problem I battle is worry. I don't like my worrying bent, but it is what it is. There are probably many in your class (maybe even you!) who were born with (or acquired) the same faulty wiring. Resting on the settled Word of God is one of the ways I'm able to stand firm. Case in point is a simple reading of Matthew 6. Jesus tells us not to worry because God has everything under control. For years I took Jesus' words against worrying as a suggestion. My life started to change when I realized that His "Don't worry" is not just a suggestion, it's a command. I needed to align my thinking with this settled word. But how does a worrier align with the settled words "Don't worry"? By holding to the settled Word that God is sovereign, God is good, and God has our days numbered. He is in control and because of this settled word, you and I can rest. Yes, it takes practice and time, but we can learn to obey even in this!

Week Four: **Are You Standing Firm in an Unsteady Culture?**  
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Don't you love the fact that within a universe created by God, that belongs to God, the psalmist declares in intimate terms, "I am Yours?" He is not only the God of this universe, He is also the psalmist's God. He is your God and He is my God!

**Notes**  
 What for *Are You Standing Firm in an Unsteady Culture?*

**ONE STEP FURTHER:**  
**"I am Yours" . . .**  
 Matthew Poole's that includes the "I am Yours" both in Psalms 119:96 and 119:106. Spend some time meditating on the Poole's throughout the week. Don't just take a favorite verse or two from the Poole and correct it to memory. Read it out periodically.

*He will cover you with His justice,  
 But under His wings you may seek refuge;  
 His righteousness is a shield and helmet.  
 —Psalm 91:4*

**ONE STEP FURTHER:**  
**The God who established the earth . . .**  
 Spend some time considering the peace and character of God. Where is comfort in an unsteady passage that still is about the present? How can you teach them on your part?

*On each passage in Psalm 119:96-106, carefully read through the scripture and consider its application.*

**Digging Deeper . . .**  
 Looking at different translations

One study method you may already be using is looking at several translations of the same verse. Let's see how this sheds additional light on the text verse of the Lament psalm, Psalm 119:96.

"I have seen a limit to all perfection; Your commandment is exceedingly broad."

This statement may be entirely clear to some. To others of us, though, it leaves perplexed looks on our faces. The phrase "a limit to all perfection" isn't clear to me. Given that, let's take a look at a few other renderings of this particular verse with the help of Logos Bible Software ([www.logos.com/](http://www.logos.com/))

*I have seen an end of all perfection; thy commandment is exceeding broad. —DARBY*

*I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandment is exceeding broad. —ASV*

*I have seen an end of all perfection; but thy commandment is exceeding broad. —AV 1873*

*I have seen a limit to all perfection, but your commandment is exceedingly broad. —ESV*

**Sweeter than Chocolate!**  
 In Matthew 5:13 of Psalm 119

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**Notes**  
 What for *Are You Standing Firm in an Unsteady Culture?*

*I have learned that everything has limits, but your commandment is perfect. —GNT*

*I have seen a limit to all perfection, but Your command is without limit. —HCSB*

*I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandment is exceeding broad. —KJV*

*I see the limits to everything human, but the horizons can't contain your commands! —The Message*

*Realize that everything has its limits, but your commands are beyond full comprehension. —NET*

*I have seen the limits of all perfection, but your command is without bounds. —NASB1995*

*I have seen a limit to all perfection; Your commandment is exceedingly broad. —NASB95*

*Everything I see has its limits, but your commands have none. —NCV*

*I've learned that everything has its limits, but your commands are perfect. They are always there when I need them. —NIV*

*To all perfection I see a limit, but your commands are boundless. —NIV*

*I have seen the consummation of all perfection, but Your commandment is exceedingly broad. —NKJV*

*Even perfection has its limits, but your commands have no limit. —NET*

*I have seen a limit to all perfection, but your commandment is exceedingly broad. —NRSV*

**Sweeter than Chocolate!**  
 In Matthew 5:13 of Psalm 119

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*Leader notes*

**Additional Teaching:**

In my opinion, there is no teaching anywhere more powerful than the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 6 on worry. Consider working through this passage and helping your class unpack it.

**Live It:**

- I can learn to control my worry by aligning with God's truth.
- I will not look for stability in places that have no foundation.
- I will find my stability in God and point others to my Rock.

**OPTIONAL BREAK**

Week Four: **Are You Standing Firm in an Unsteady Culture?**  
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*Leader notes*

**SEGMENT #4: Mem (verses 97–104)**

[pages 83-88]

**Key Talk Points:** A word that is sweeter than chocolate  
 A word that makes me wise!

**Context/Comments:** There is, perhaps, no sweeter stanza than Mem. Although the phrase “whole heart” does not appear in the stanza itself, Mem paints the picture of a heart wholly devoted to God. It is a heart that loves God’s law (v. 97) and hates every false way (v. 104). The psalmist meditates on God’s law “all the day” (v. 97) and he lives a “more than” (*min*) life, with more “wisdom” (*chakam*) than his enemies, more “insight” (*saka!*) than his teachers, and more “understanding” (*bin*) than the aged. How sweet is the word to him? Again, it is “more than” (*min*) honey! Is God’s Word what it claims to be? Yes, and “more”!

In six out of the eight lines, the prefix *min* attached to various root words is the line leader. The Mem word beginning the other two lines is *matay* (“how”) in verses 97 and 103.

**Discussion Questions:**

*Is God’s Word sweeter than chocolate to you? Explain.*

*Which comes first, the chicken or the egg?  
 Read the stanza together and discuss the following:*

*Do we meditate on God’s Word because we love it, love it because we meditate on it, or both?*

*How would you communicate this to someone else?*

Week Four: **Are You Standing Firm in an Unsteady Culture?**  
*Class pages*

Consider your life for a moment. Does what you know about the Word of God translate into action? Do your hands and feet do what your brain knows is right or have you experienced something of a spiritual paralysis? Explain.

**Notes**  
*Notes for Are You Standing Firm in an Unsteady Culture?*

**FYI:**  
**More insight . . .**  
 In Psalm 119:105 the psalmist tells us that he has more insight ( Hebrew *chayah*) than all his teachers because God's instruction is to reality. It is very interesting to note the Hebrew word is the same one that appears in Genesis 3:6 where we are told that the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good and eat? "was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise (chayah)"  
 One may have been looking for the right thing, but she followed a false way. Her wisdom does not come from a tree but from meditating on the Words of God.

**FYI:**  
**What's a lemma?**  
 In linguistics, a lemma is a grouping of words that are all different forms of the same root word. For example, in Psalm 119:105 and 106, the word "meditation" appears. That particular word is also found only appears in that Psalm and in the book of Job. The word form (root) of the same Hebrew word, however, occurs more frequently in Scripture. They are both from the same root in Hebrew. A simple example in English is that, called, bats, having some sort of different applications or parts of speech. When you're doing a word study, this is an important concept to keep in mind. Why? Because words that are related but always look related after they've been translated. For instance, with "bathed" and "bat" had very different in English, they come from the same Hebrew root, *batul*.

**Digging Deeper . . .**  
**A cure for spiritual paralysis: Meditation**  
 While meditation carries something of a mystical eastern religion stigma in the minds of many people, the concept appears throughout the Bible. It is not an emptying of the mind, nor is it only for the spiritual "elite." In fact, if you're a warrior, it's already something you're an expert at in the negative sense. So this week, take some time to see what God's Word says on this topic. Search on the word that appears in Psalm 119 plus other words translated "meditate" in the Bible. Note how they are used.

Look closely at the first chapter of Joshua in your study.

**Sweeter than Chocolate!**  
 An Inductive Study of Psalm 119

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**Notes**  
*Notes for Are You Standing Firm in an Unsteady Culture?*

Record your questions, observations, and applications in the space below.

What was your biggest application point from your study on meditation? How will you incorporate what you learned into your life this week?

We saw that the psalmist meditates on the Word, but who does He say His teacher is?

**Sweeter than Chocolate!**  
 An Inductive Study of Psalm 119

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**Leader notes**

What are some false ways we follow? How can we identify a false way?

How do you meditate on God's Words?

Who taught the psalmist? What can we learn from this? Where is the balance? (I think there's a warning to both students and teachers here – we need to be in right relationship to God's Word and to one another. A human being can never replace God as the Teacher!)

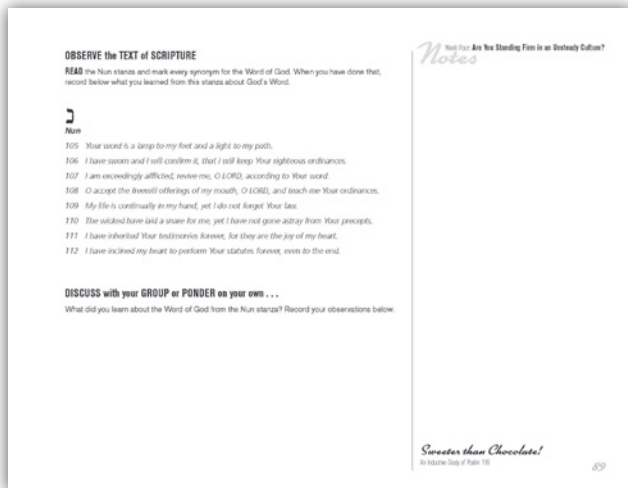
**Additional Teaching:**

Week Four is a time when I will often Skype in a special guest. It's a way to bring variety to the discussion and expose your class to different teachers or experts on a subject. This lesson lends itself to the topics of memorizing Scripture and incorporating Sabbath rest into a busy schedule among others.

For those of you unfamiliar with Skype, it is essentially free video-conferencing over the web. It's a no-brainer if you have a Mac, and still relatively easy with Windows. Be aware that whenever you try something new, you may have glitches. Let your class know that is part of the adventure and without a little change, you get absolutely nowhere!

**Live It:**

- Will I pursue God's Word like chocolate?
- "More than" wisdom comes only from God's Word.



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*Leader notes*

**SEGMENT #5: Nun (verses 105-112)**

[pages 89-92]

**Key Talk Point:** Learning to walk in the light I have

**Context/Comments:** How do you discover God's will? Start by walking in the light you have. Nun opens with one of the most familiar verses in Psalm 119, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." We know it, but do we live it? Like the Kaph stanza we talked about first today, we see evidence of extreme affliction – "exceedingly afflicted" (v. 107) and the wicked "laid a snare" (v. 110). The psalmist even tells us in v. 109 that his life is constantly in jeopardy ("my life is continually in my hand"). Yet the mood of this stanza is hope. The psalm opens with light for the psalmist's feet to walk and closes with joy for the psalmist's heart to embrace – forever joy, based on God's forever words.

**Discussion Questions:**

*What is the difference between a lamp and a high-beam headlight?*

*From what you know of God through His Word, what kind of light does He give? Give examples from Scripture.*

Usually we are given enough to obey, but not the whole picture. There are, however, instances when God shines a light way down a path. He tells Abraham that his descendants will be enslaved in Egypt several generations before it happens.

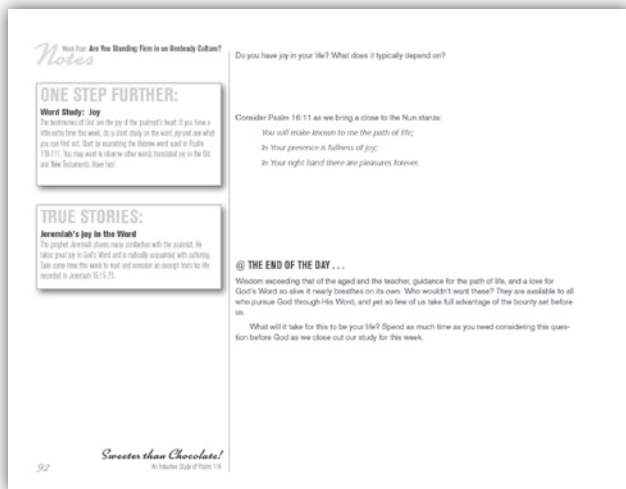
*What step of obedience would you take if you knew for sure you were hearing God's voice?*

*How will stepping into the light you have help you know?*

Week Four: **Are You Standing Firm in an Unsteady Culture?**  
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*Leader notes*

The D.A. Carson quote on page 91 of the student workbook talks about deliberate devotion to the Word. What in your life characterizes deliberate devotion to God and His Word? Does anything need to change? If so, what?

When you think of deliberate devotion, what biblical characters come to mind? How can we learn from them?

How does making a decision to stand firm before life's storms hit affect your ability to actually stand firm? How is this illustrated in the stanza?

**ILLUSTRATION:** By the grace of God, my husband and I have been married for nearly 24 years. By today's standards, we married too young. He was almost 23 and I was 19 . . . and a half. Enough said? We did plenty of stupid things I'll save for illustration fodder elsewhere, but we did at least one thing right. We decided in advance that no matter what life brought our way we were going to stick together. We joked that while one of us might kill the other, we wouldn't divorce. We were young when we committed, but we both committed for life. If we hadn't, I don't know where we would be today. Deciding in advance to follow God's way helped us stand firm and stay together during some hard times. The psalmist decided in advance about God and His Word. When times got tough, he held fast to what he knew was right and eternal.

**Live It:**

- The light God gives me is all the light I need.
- Choosing obedience before the tempest hits will help me stand firm.

**SEGMENT #6 SUMMING UP AND LOOKING AHEAD**

- What key benefits does God's Word claim it provides?
- How will your life look different this week if you live in light of one of them?

**Next week:**

Samekh – Fearing God, I need fear nothing else; God is my stability and support

Ayin – Investing in what is more valuable than gold; serving a God who acts

Pe – Pursuing a God who gives understanding to the simple

Tsadhe – Held by an everlasting righteousness



### Summary Thoughts Samekh through Tsadhe:

Where do we find stability in unstable times? We find it in God and His Word. Of our texts for this week, Samekh is the stability stanza. The psalmist uses words of stability, safety, and support throughout though he is not satisfied with stability alone. Because of his servant relationship to the LORD, we see him in the Ayin stanza calling on God to act on His behalf – both for him and against his adversaries. In Samekh and Ayin we see back-to-back stanza usage of the word hate (*sane*), and the psalmist hating both the double-minded (v. 113) and every false way (v. 128). While the whole of Psalm 119 is filled with emotion, the psalmist weighs in heavily in these four stanzas regarding what he loves and hates. Two of the four Psalm 119 occurrences of “hate” appear in this grouping of stanzas as well as five of the twelve occurrences of “love” (*ahab*).

The Pe stanza is one of my favorites because of its assurance that God’s Word gives light to the simple. We see continuing emotion in this stanza as the psalmist pants and longs for God’s commandments and weeps in grief over those who break His law. The Tsadhe stanza is a perfect place to land the discussion for the week because in it we discover that while we are small and helpless like the psalmist, our God is a God of everlasting righteousness. Talk about stability!

One additional note before we jump in. The stanzas in this section will be an easy place for your students to go searching for Hebrew words that begin lines as there are no confusing prefixed prepositions nudging their way in.

*Leader notes*

# Week Five

## Finding Stability in Unstable Times

### BEFORE CLASS

#### Hot Topics in these Stanzas:

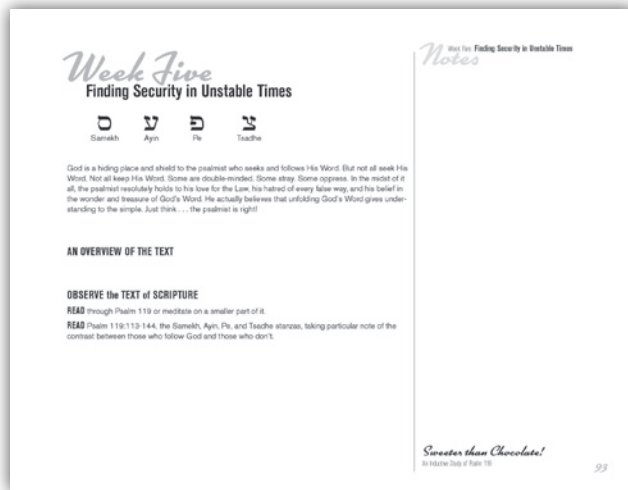
Who isn’t looking for a shred of sanity in today’s unstable times? While the economy shakes, God’s Word offers ultimate security. In fact, in fearing God we need fear nothing else. His Word is an investment that never goes bad, never returns void. It is sweeter than chocolate, it is better than gold, stocks, real estate, and even cold cash. And it is within reach! God’s stable Word gives understanding to the simple, and His righteousness is not only trustworthy, it is also everlasting!

#### Class-at-a-Glance

<i>Segments</i>	<i>2 Hour Class</i>	<i>1 Hour Class</i>	<i>Topic</i>
Segment 1:	15 min. 15 min.	OMIT 10 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Psalm 119</li> <li>• Review basic concepts</li> <li>• Aleph through Nun overview</li> </ul>
Segment 2:	15 min.	10 min.	Samekh - Fearing God, I need fear nothing else; God is my stability and support
Segment 3:	15 min.	10 min.	Ayin - Investing in what is more valuable than gold; serving a God who acts
Optional Break	15 min.	OMIT	
Segment 4:	15 min.	10 min.	Pe - Pursuing a God who gives understanding to the simple
Segment 5:	15 min.	10 min.	Tsadhe - Held by an everlasting righteousness
Segment 6:	15 min.	10 min.	Summing Up and Looking Ahead

# Class pages

## Week Five: Finding Stability in Unstable Times



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### Leader notes

## START CLASS HERE

### SEGMENT #1: REVIEW

#### Read Psalm 119

#### Review Basic Concepts

#### Review Questions:

What are some significant facts about Psalm 119?

What kind of Psalm is Psalm 119?

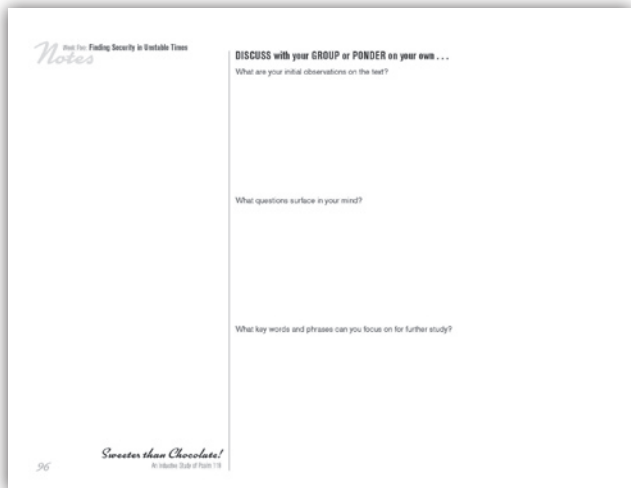
How many stanzas does it have? How many lines per stanza?

If it were in English, how would it be laid out?

Week Five: **Finding Stability in Unstable Times**  
*Class pages*



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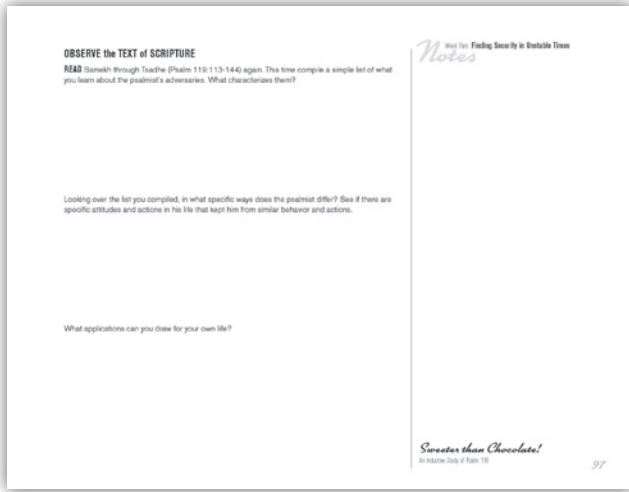
*Leader notes*

What is the overall theme?

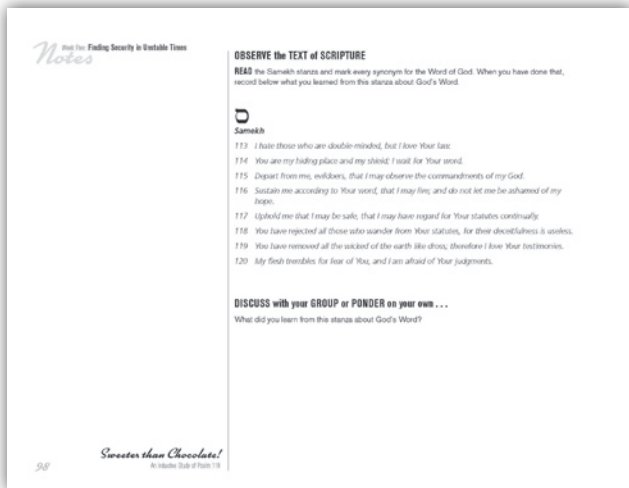
How many synonyms are used for God's Word and what are some of them?

What significant number is associated with this Psalm?

What is the biggest takeaway application you have had thus far?



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*Leader notes*

**Samekh through Tsadhe Overview:**

[page 97]

**Discussion Question:**

*What questions do you have after reading these stanzas?*

*How do those who follow God differ from those who don't?*

*What characterizes "adversaries"?*

*Which of the psalmist's attitudes will benefit our thinking? How can we incorporate them?*

**SEGMENT #2: Samekh (verses 113-120)**

[pages 98-103]

**Key Talk Points:** Fearing God, I need fear nothing else

God is my stability and support

**Context/Comments:** Samekh begins an interesting run of three stanzas where the letter that names the stanza appears in a key word in the text. Here the psalmist asks God to "sustain" (*samak*) and "uphold" him. Indeed this is a stanza of stability and safety. God is referred to as a "hiding place" and "shield." In an interesting twist, while he twice uses the term love (*ahab*) referring to God's law and testimonies (vv. 113 and 119) he now closes the stanza using three separate fear-based words to describe how he feels about God: tremble (*samar*), fear (*pachad*), and afraid (*yare*). The verb form for the word translated "fear" (*pachad*) shows up later in Shin translated "stands in awe." We have seen references in previous stanzas to "those who fear [*yare*] God"

# Week Five: Finding Stability in Unstable Times

## Class pages



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### Leader notes

(vv. 63, 74, 79) and here we find the psalmist putting himself in this group. The psalmist and you and I don't have to fear anything else if we fear God and take refuge in Him and His Word.

Samekh is one of two "s" letters in Hebrew. The other letter, Sin, is a little complicated so we'll hold off on it until next week.

### Discussion Questions:

*How are we double-minded? How can we combat it?*

*Considering Matthew 6, do you serve two masters? How does serving two master affect us?*

*How does the truth that God is your hiding place and shield enable you to wait?*

*Is there a tension between the psalmist's love of God's Word and his fear? Explain.*

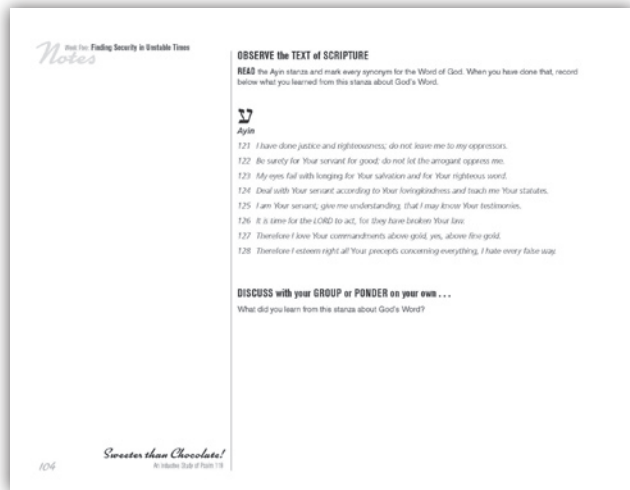
*Respond to this statement: Fearing God, I don't need to fear anything else. Do you agree or disagree? Why?*

### Additional Teaching:

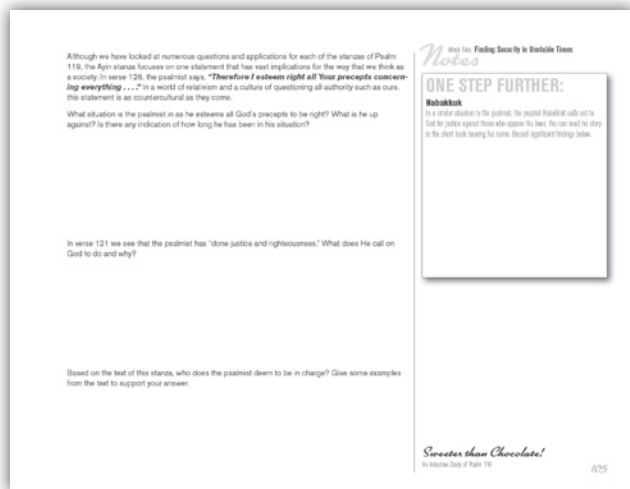
For additional teaching on this stanza consider going deeply into Joshua 24, Matthew 6:16-34, and James 1. In fact, if you have the time, consider how a proper fear of the Lord is exhibited *throughout* Scripture.

### Live It:

- If I fear God, I don't have to fear anything else.
- God seeks whole hearts, not double-minds.



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*Leader notes*

**SEGMENT #3: Ayin (verses 121-128)**

*[pages 104-107]*

**Key Talk Points:** Investing in what is more valuable than gold  
 Serving a God who acts

**Context/Comments:** The Hebrew word for “eye” is *ayin*, so it is not surprising to see verse 123 begin with the word *ayin* in reference to the psalmist’s eyes. He says his eyes fail longing for God’s salvation. The word that stands out most prominently in this stanza, though, is *asah*. It begins lines 121, 124, and 126 and is translated “done,” “deal,” and “act.” For the sake of remembering, I like to focus on “act” since it matches up in English with *Ayin*. The psalmist reminds God that he has acted in a just manner (v. 121), he prays that God will act toward him in lovingkindness (v. 124), and finally calls on the LORD to act against those who have broken His law (v. 126). The psalmist calls on God in this way because of their relationship. Three times in this stanza alone he refers to himself as the LORD’s servant (*ebed*). The psalmist knows that God will eventually act. Because of what the psalmist knows, He loves God’s commandments, invests in them, and values them above fine gold. How do we compare?

**Discussion Questions:**

*Did anyone find a key repeated word hiding in this chapter?*

We’re fishing for *asah* that appears in verses 121, 124, and 126.

*Were any other words repeated three times?*

We’re fishing for *ebed* that appears in verses 122, 124, and 125.

*What significance do these two words have in this stanza?*

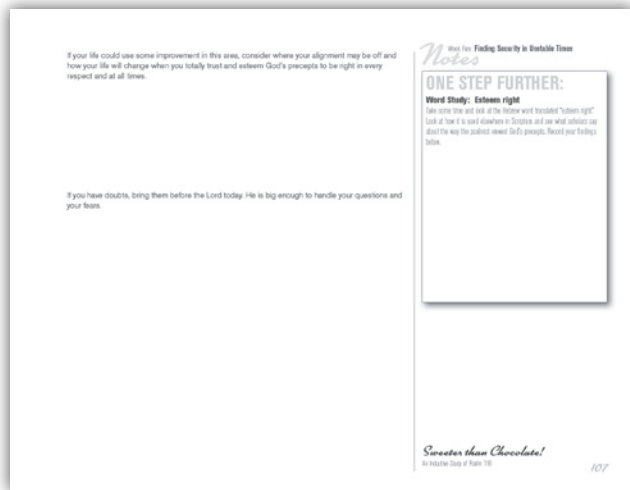
*If we serve the same God (and we do!), how will the psalmist’s prayer impact how we pray?*

# Class pages

## Week Five: Finding Stability in Unstable Times



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### Leader notes

What in my life points to my being God's servant? What points to the contrary?

Are there areas where you tend to doubt God's precepts?

How will believing all God's precepts are true affect the way we think and live?

**ILLUSTRATION:** In America we have a culture trained to both doubt and "tolerate." But neither disposition gives with accepting any form of truth as absolute, although truth by definition is absolute. I have a counselor friend who says that when people respond, "Yes, but . . ." to advice, she knows they will not change because they have not accepted the truth of what she has said. "Yes, but . . ." is not a response that esteems right what has been said. We often respond "Yes, but . . ." to God. Whether it is our cultural bent towards doubt or flat-out rebellion, our response needs to change from "Yes, but . . ." to "Yes, Sir!"

### Additional Teaching:

Consider sharing how we have the Bible in its current form and why it is reliable. You may give a brief history of the human side of the Bible's authorship and the canonization process. This is a perfect place to tap into a local Bible professor or pastor to teach a short segment. Remember, they don't have to be there in the flesh; they can drop in via computer!

Always be watching for opportunities to connect your students with other teachers who can spur them on to think more deeply. I'm probably not supposed to say this, but the truth of the matter is that it is easy to get possessive of a class. Being "the teacher" touches something in our egos that feels good. Whenever we think we are the only ones who can feed Christ's sheep, we're in danger. Bringing in others to teach segments from time to time helps keep our egos in check and students focused on the Word.

*Leader notes*

**Live It:**

- God’s precepts are right. I need to continually align myself to that fact.
- The God who acted on behalf of His servant in Psalm 119 is the same God who acts on behalf of His servants today.

**OPTIONAL BREAK**

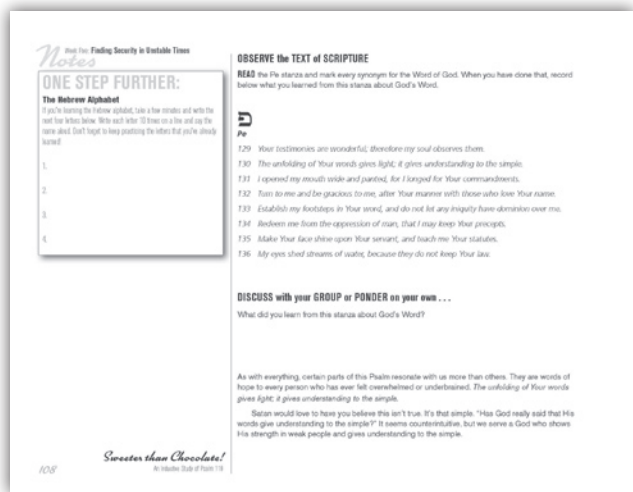
**SEGMENT #4: Pe (verses 129-136)**

*[pages 108-111]*

**Key Talk Point:** Pursuing a God who gives understanding to the simple

**Context/Comments:** Pe in Hebrew means “mouth.” As the third line of Ayin opened with “eye,” the third line of Pe opens with “mouth.” Is there something special about it being the third line? Got me! I doubt it, but it is interesting to note they both fall that way. Why even mention this? Because while it is critical to watch the text carefully for comparisons, contrasts, patterns, etc., not every little thing you see is a big thing. Not everything has to be a big thing. When you train yourself to watch closely, though, you’ll start turning over both gems and regular old rocks and before you know it, with the leading of the Holy Spirit you’ll start seeing the differences more and more clearly.

The psalmist uses an interesting repetition of the Hebrew word *or* in verses 130 and 135 that is not readily apparent in English. The NASB translates verse 130 “The unfolding of Your words **gives light**; it gives understanding to the simple.” Then in verse 135 we read, “Make Your face **shine upon** Your servant, and teach me Your statutes.” When God unfolds His words and teaches us, there is light and the simple understand. Don’t let your students miss this truth! ThDs and PhDs are so valuable to the Church, but help your students grasp that they do not have to have a ThD to understand the Bible – God, who cannot lie, says He gives understanding to the simple! The psalmist just asked for understanding in the Ayin stanza and will ask for it again in the Tsadhe stanza which follows. Understanding also helps stabilize us in unstable times.



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# Class pages

## Week Five: Finding Stability in Unstable Times

As we consider the Pe stanza, let's investigate further this claim that the Word of God gives understanding to the simple. We're going to approach this question from two directions. First, take some time to search a concordance for the word translated "understanding." This will help us zero in on others in the Old Testament who had understanding. There are several notable characters including Joseph, David, Solomon, and Daniel. Focus on at least one of them and more if time permits. Read their stories and consider what the Word says about their wisdom. Also consider how they finished life. Did they end well or poorly? Record your findings below.

Notes  
**Notes for Finding Stability in Unstable Times**  
**FVI:**  
**Wonder that!**  
 According to the theological dictionary of the Old Testament the word "wonder" means, "to wonder, beyond human capabilities." In other words, it is something that strikes man and makes him take notice. It is the same we read of upon the coming child who will be called, among other things, Wonderful (Isaiah 9:6).

Second, take some time to think through other examples including from the New Testament—understanding or wisdom showing up in unlikely people. Give examples you won't want to miss in that of Peter and John in Acts 4. What did the people notice about them? What was peculiar? Can the same be said of you?

What does the psalmist ask God for in the stanza?

*Sweeter than Chocolate!*  
 An Inductive Study of Psalm 119

page 109

Notes  
**Notes for Finding Stability in Unstable Times**

**QUIZ:**  
 (Open book if you need it!)  
 Without looking, try writing the names of the first 14 stanzas of Psalm 119 and the corresponding Hebrew letters.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.
- 13.
- 14.

Biblically speaking, does understanding mean that iniquity will not have dominion over us? Explain your answer. Cite chapter and verse.

Have you ever found yourself longing for God's commandments the way the psalmist does? Why or why not?

**Digging Deeper . . .**  
**"My eyes shed streams of water . . ."**

Throughout Psalm 119 we have seen from a number of angles the psalmist's view of those who do not follow God's law—the path he walks. He has burning indignation, he seeks freedom from their oppression, and he hates the false way. In 119:136 we see another side: tears of grief over people who do not keep God's Law.

So here is the very wide open Digging Deeper mission: Spend some extended time in the Gospels this week examining how Jesus interacts with people who either do not know or do not keep God's Law. As you read, you'll notice that the Gospels in Gospels were. See if you can find patterns in the ways He deals with different types of people and attitudes. Record your findings and relevant applications below.

*Sweeter than Chocolate!*  
 An Inductive Study of Psalm 119

page 110

### Leader notes

Pe is one of the Hebrew letters that does double duty. When it appears by itself, it makes an “f” sound. When it appears with a dot inside of it (the dot, remember, is called a dagesh), it makes a “p” sound. Pronouncing the letters sounds like this: fay / pay. Think of them, like Veth and Beth (pronounced vet / bet), as fraternal twins. We'll meet the identical twins next week.

### Discussion Questions:

*Did anyone happen to find out what the letter Pe means? No, it wasn't in your homework.*

*What biblical character did you look at this week when you studied wisdom? (p. 109) What did you learn? How did this person finish life – well or poorly?*

Although your students should have read the account of Peter and John in Acts 4, I suggest they read Acts 4:1-20 aloud before you ask the following questions. This is a powerful passage for regular people like you and me.

*What did the people notice about Peter and John?*

*How are they described?*

*When people look at you, do they recognize that you have been with Jesus?*

*Based on your observations of the Church, how fully do you think the message that God gives understanding to the simple has impacted the lives of typical believers? Explain.*

*How could more fully embracing this truth change individuals and the Church as a whole?*

# Class pages

## Week Five: Finding Stability in Unstable Times



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### Leader notes

**Illustration:** Her name is Michelle. I wish I could introduce you to her in person. My husband and I worked in youth ministry for close to ten years early in our marriage, about half of them spent with college-age students. One day over breakfast I challenged a group of about ten college girls and two adult leaders to join me in reading through the Bible over the coming year. At the end of that year, both of the adult leaders had completed the journey, as well as two of the young people. One was Jess, a grad student who is now a youth pastor's wife and a middle school foreign language teacher. The other was Michelle. Unlike the rest of the group that did not finish, Michelle has severe learning disabilities. She can't drive, although she has her own apartment and holds a job working with senior citizens in a long-term care facility. Not only did she finish reading her Bible in a year, she also completed the 32-week Precept Upon Precept study on the book of Hebrews. Does the unfolding of the Word give understanding to the simple? You better believe it!

### Additional Teaching:

The height of simplicity, the summit of meeting people where they can understand, came with the Christ event. God sent His Son in flesh so people could see His glory. There is never a bad time to look at the incarnation. Consider talking about God revealing Himself in His Son, especially if you have seekers in your class who have not heard the Gospel presented simply and clearly.

Another interesting avenue is to unpack the phrase, "Turn to me and be gracious to me, after Your manner with those who love Your name." What is God's "manner with those who love [His] name"?

### Live It:

- God's Word is not distant. It is near and so accessible.
- By God's grace, I can understand it and confidently tell other people they can understand it too!

### SEGMENT #5: Tsadhe (verses 137-144)

[pages 112-116]

**Key Talk Point:** Held by an everlasting righteousness

**Context/Comments:** Righteous. The letter Tsadhe sounds very close to the Hebrew word for righteous, close enough for *this* beginning Hebrew student to put the two together on the basis of sound. Some Hebrew speakers call this letter Tsadik – the word for righteous. Scholars explain the change in pronunciation from

# Class pages

## Week Five: Finding Stability in Unstable Times



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### Leader notes

Tsadhe to Tsadik as a result of people reciting the Aleph Bet (alphabet) quickly. When you say Tsadhe-Qoph quickly, the Tsadhe picks up the hard “k” from the beginning of the Qoph. Either way you slice it though, the Tsadhe stanza is all about righteousness with forms of the word “righteous” appearing five times in the eight-line stanza.

It is very interesting and telling that neither in the righteousness stanza nor anywhere else in Psalm 119 does the psalmist use the term righteousness to describe himself. He speaks about righteous acts he’s done in Ayin, but the inherent quality of righteousness is something he attributes only to God and His Word.

In addition to the righteousness word group, several other words appear in pairs in this stanza: *meod* (v. 138 - exceeding; v. 140 - very); *tsar* (v. 139 - adversaries; v. 143 - trouble); *shakach* (v. 139 - have forgotten; v. 141 - do not forget); and *olam* (v. 142 - everlasting; v. 144 - forever).

A final note on the letter Tsadhe before we move on. Tsadhe is one of several letters that have two different looks – a regular look and an alternate form for when it appears at the end of a word. It is like the final sigma in Greek, but there are more of them! (Kaph and Mem are two other with alternate forms). Same letter, different look – kind of like the road jerseys on a baseball team.

### Discussion Questions:

*What is the key word in the Tsadhe stanza? How many times does a form of it appear? What did you learn about it?*

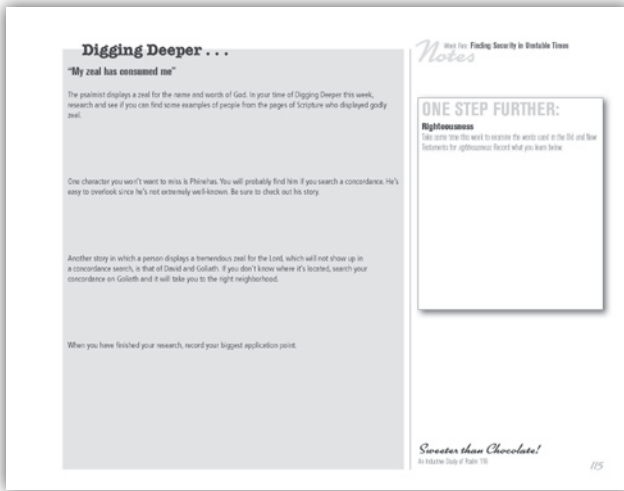
*How do the psalmist's words about righteousness compare with what Paul says?*

*Do we consciously live as new creatures? What does this involve?*

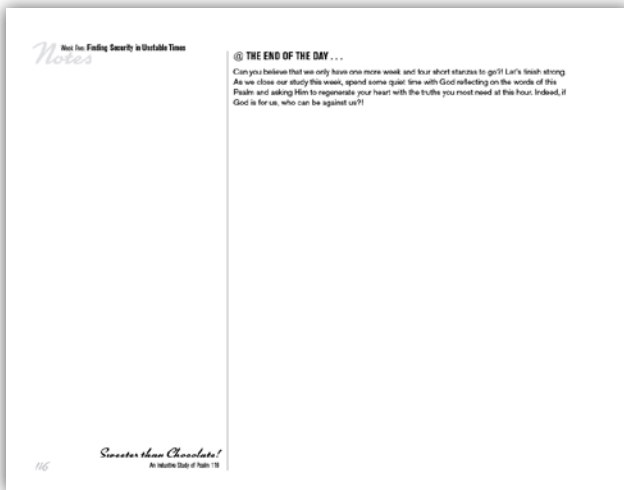
*Do you live a life that is zealous for God? What did you learn about zeal in the **Digging Deeper** section? Is zeal always pleasing to God? Explain.*

# Class pages

Week Five: **Finding Stability in Unstable Times**



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## Leader notes

### Additional Teaching:

We looked at 2 Corinthians 5 in our lesson, but you may consider supplementing this teaching on righteousness with Romans 4 where Paul speaks about Abraham being made righteous by faith *before* the Law was given and about David talking about people being credited as righteous *after* the Law was given.

### Live It:

- I am only righteous through Jesus.
- God's righteousness is everlasting.

### SEGMENT #6 SUMMING UP AND LOOKING AHEAD

- What key benefits does God's Word claim it provides?
- How will your life look different this week if you live in light of one of them?

### Next week:

Ooph – Crying out to a God who hears

Resh – Revived by a living Word

Shin – Living the peace-filled life

Tav – Following a God who continues to seek

### Summary Thoughts Qoph through Tav:

Last week as we looked at Ayin and Pe we saw the usage of eye and mouth tied in with the stanza titles. Now, as we look at Qoph and Resh, we will see the psalmist crying out for life and revival to a God who both hears and sees. Qoph has an abundance of aural words, Resh visual and life words. Both stanzas end (as did Tsadhe which precedes them both) with a statement about the foreverness of God's Word: [Tsadhe - "Your testimonies are righteous forever"; Qoph - "Of old I have known of Your testimonies that You have founded them forever"; Resh - "And every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting." In the midst of affliction, this is not a here-today-gone-tomorrow fix; it both has endured and will endure. Watch throughout these four stanzas specifically for words of life, salvation, deliverance, help, redemption, and rescue.

As the psalmist nears the close in Shin and finishes with Tav, we see stanzas characterized by love and praise. In Shin alone, the psalmist uses "love" (*ahab*) three times and continues to talk about benefits to those who, like him, love God's Word. The praise continues in Tav. In the first half of the stanza the psalmist praises God's Word. As he closes, however, the tone changes from praise to need. Though he longs for God's salvation and delights in his law, he is in need of help. The man who has set out to be blameless knows even he has strayed.

For all of his striving, for all of his love of the law, for all of his prayer and pursuit, the psalmist knows he is but a lost sheep in need of the Great Shepherd.

### Leader notes

# Week Six

## Ready for Every Tomorrow!

### BEFORE CLASS

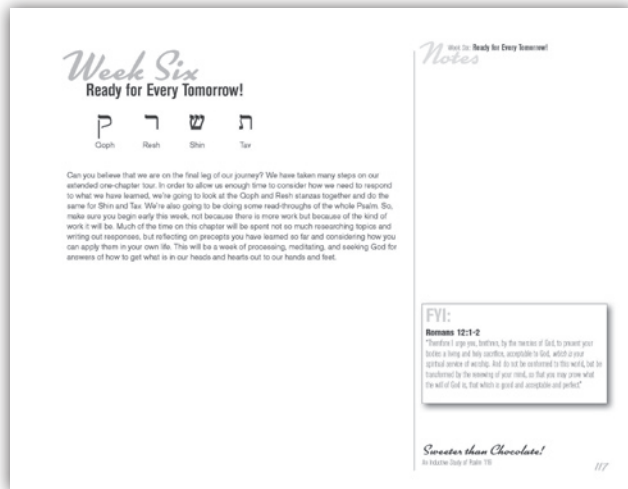
#### Hot Topics in these Stanzas:

No matter how dark the day, no matter how deep the pit, we have a God who sees our lot, hears our cries, and saves us. He rescues and revives! Know anyone who is looking for peace? God holds it out to those who love His Word – and not just peace but great peace along with the confidence that He will keep us from stumbling. It is a Word that inspires praise, gives understanding, brings delight to the soul, and makes us ready for every tomorrow!

Note that this class format is set up a little differently from those of previous weeks. We are combining the discussion of Qoph / Resh and Shin / Tav to leave more time at the end of the session for students to talk about what they have learned over the course of our time together. Because of this, you will notice that we have not included any Additional Teaching ideas. This will be an important time of discussing, processing, and cementing truths we have learned in our study of Psalm 119.

#### Class-at-a-Glance

Segments	2 Hour Class	1 Hour Class	Topic
Segment 1:	15 min. 15 min.	OMIT 10 min.	• Read Psalm 119 • Review basic concepts
Segment 2:	25 min.	15 min.	Qoph - Crying out to a God who hears Resh - Revived by the living Word
Optional Break	10 min.	OMIT	
Segment 3:	25 min.	15 min.	Shin - Living the peace-filled life Tav - Following a God who continues to seek
Segment 4:	30 min.	20 min.	Looking Back, Wrapping Up, and Living Out



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*Leader notes*

**START CLASS HERE**

**SEGMENT #1: REVIEW**

Read Psalm 119

Review Basic Concepts

Review Questions:

*What are some significant facts about Psalm 119?*

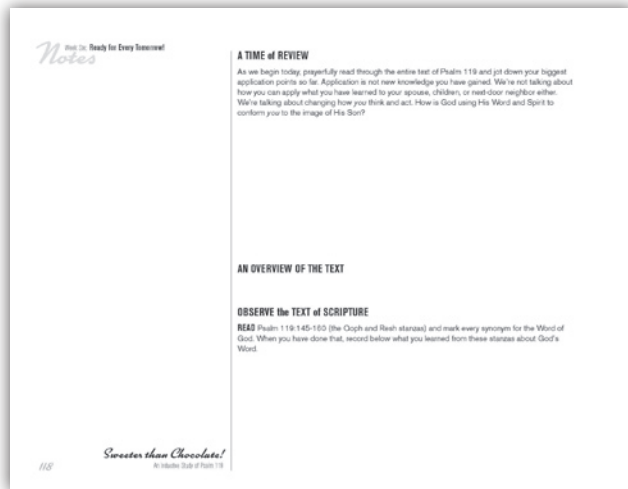
*What kind of Psalm is Psalm 119?*

*How many stanzas does it have? How many lines per stanza?*

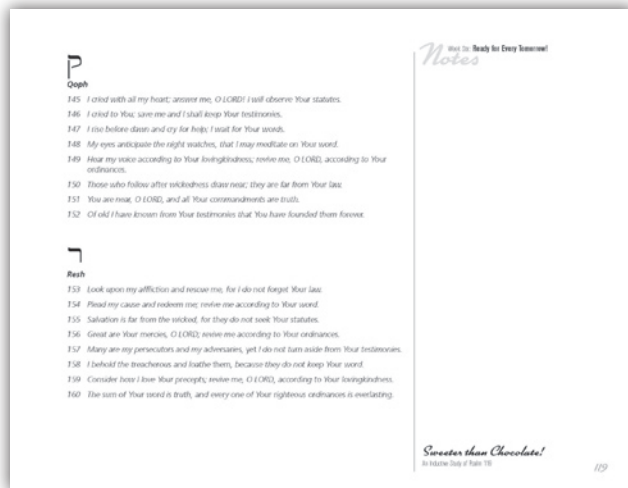
*If it were in English, how would it be laid out?*

*What is the overall theme?*

*How many synonyms are used for God's Word and what are some of them?*



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page 119

*Leader notes*

What significant number is associated with this Psalm?

What is the biggest takeaway application you have had thus far?

**SEGMENT #2: Qoph (verses 145-152)**

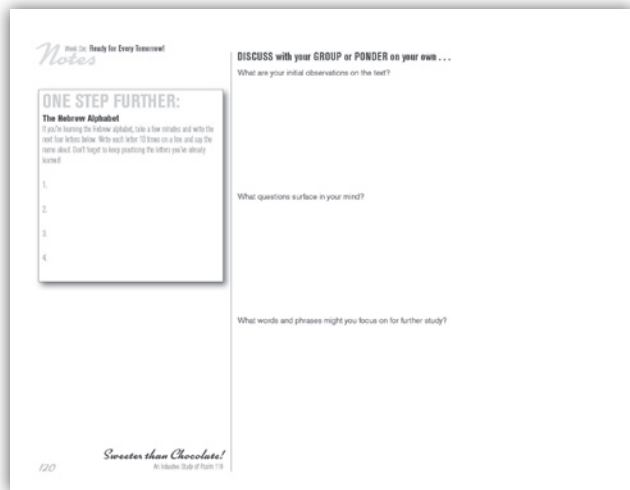
*[pages 118-123]*

**Key Talk Point:** Crying out to a God who hears

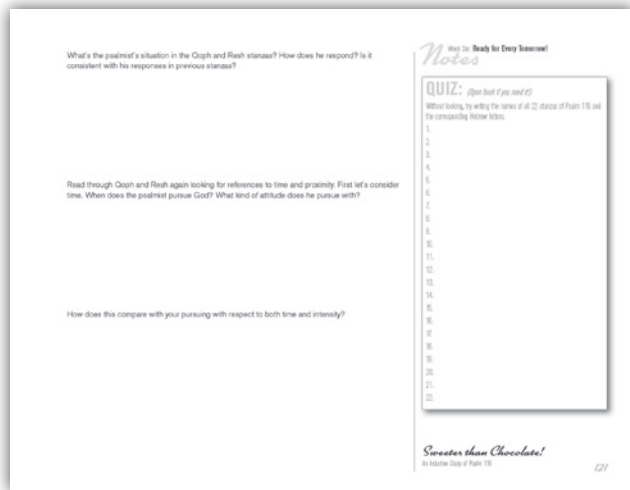
**Context/Comments:** If we remember Ayin for the eye and Pe for the mouth, we will do well to associate the ear with the Qoph stanza, because the psalmist cries throughout the stanza to a God who hears. He employs a great deal of repetition in his initial words as you'll see below, using three sets of words in back-to-back lines (note italics):

- 145 *Qara - cried*
- 146 *Qara - cried*
- 147 *Qadam - rise*
- 148 *Qadam - anticipate*
- 149 *Qol - voice*
- 150 *Qarab - (v) draw near*
- 151 *Qarob - (n) near*
- 152 *Qedem - old*

The psalmist does not offer up empty cries. He fully believes God will hear, answer, and help according to His lovingkindness. He calls to a God who will save and revive! Note also the words of proximity in verses 150 and 151 and also in verse 155 of Resh. Those who follow after wickedness “draw near” the psalmist as they distance themselves from God’s law, but the LORD is *also* “near” so the wicked are putting themselves in extreme danger. While the sense of distant is an obvious contrast, *qarob* (near) is also a term of covenant for



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*Leader notes*

a near relative. The most obvious example is from the book of Ruth, where Boaz is a close relative (*qarob*), but before he can redeem Ruth he must approach through a relative who is even closer. The text of Qoph suggests this and the fact that early in the Resh stanza the psalmist calls on God to redeem (*gaal*) him evidences that the psalmist has covenantal relationship in mind. Contrasting, the wicked are far from God *because* they are not in covenant (or have broken covenant) with Him.

**Resh (verses 153-160)**

**Key Talk Point:** Revived by the living Word

**Context/Comments:** We have two simple ways to remember the Resh stanza, one distinctively Hebrew, the other totally English.

From a mnemonic standpoint, a Hebrew reader looking at this stanza will key in on the word *raah* (translated “look,” “behold,” and “consider”) which begins verses 153, 158, and 159. Qoph is all about God hearing and responding, Resh about God seeing and reviving, which leads us to our English way of remembering.

While *raah* starts three lines, the great prayer of the Resh stanza is the thrice-repeated “Revive me.”

- 154b Revive me according to Your word.
- 156b Revive me according to Your ordinances.
- 159b Revive me, O LORD, according to Your lovingkindness.

Again, the psalmist expects this prayer to be answered based on his knowledge of God and His truth. The adjective *rab* (“great” or “many”), used four times in Psalm 119, appears twice here in Resh and twice again in the Shin stanza that immediately follows. Although the psalmist’s persecutors are “many” (v. 157), God’s mercies are “great” (v. 156) and the psalmist rejoices as one who finds “great” spoil and has “great” peace. The psalmist closes with a nod to the letter Resh as he says “The sum of Your word is truth.” The Hebrew for “sum” is *rosh* (also translated “head”).





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page 123

*Leader notes*

**Discussion Questions:**

*What is the psalmist's situation in the Qoph and Resh stanzas?*

*What human-like qualities does he attribute to God in Qoph and Resh?*

We're fishing for "hearing" in Qoph and "seeing" in Resh.

*How will believing God hears and sees affect the way we pray?*

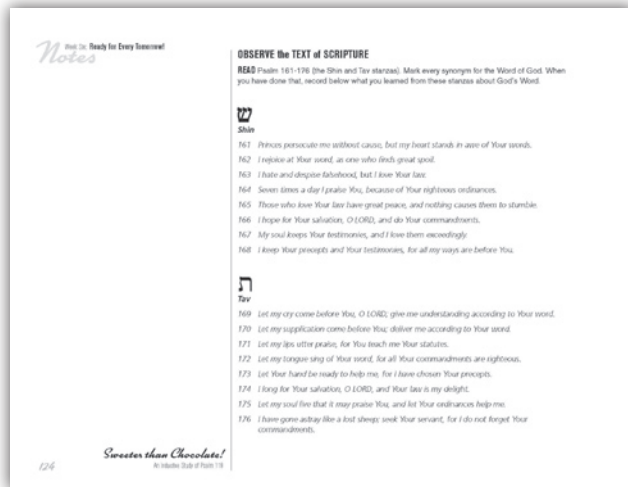
*What does the psalmist pray for?*

*What is the psalmist's heart attitude in these stanzas? How does his behavior show this?*

*Note the intensity of the psalmist's pursuit of God. When you wake in the middle of the night, what do you do? What can you do to be more like the psalmist? Help your students see that waking in the middle of the night is God's divine appointment for them.*

*When you are in a difficult situation, do you press into God or pull away from Him? What steps will you take to be more like the psalmist?*

*How does the psalmist's faith that the sum of God's Word is truth affect the way he thinks? Where have we seen this idea before?*



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*Leader notes*

**Live It:**

- The same God who heard and saw the psalmist sees and hears me.
- When I face trials I will press into God and ask him to revive me.
- I will pursue God with the psalmist's zeal.

**OPTIONAL BREAK**

**SEGMENT #3: Shin (verses 161-168)**

*[pages 124-129]*

**Key Talk Point:** Living the peace-filled life

**Context/Comments:** For the third straight stanza the psalmist uses the word *radaph* (“persecute” / “follow”) in conjunction with his adversaries. Shin opens with a statement about princes (*sar*) who persecute him without cause. Still, the overwhelming tone of the stanza is one of love, joy, hope, and peace. Love (*ahab*) appears three times in this stanza, more than in any other stanza in the Psalm (Vav and Samekh have two occurrences). What do we learn about those who love God's law? They have not only peace but great peace and nothing causes them to stumble. These will be words of life for many in your class, so make sure not to gloss over them. We have it in black and white: “Those who love Your law have great peace, and nothing causes them to stumble.”

You may have found yourself a little perplexed by this particular letter. Is it Shin or Sin? And where does that dot go? It is actually both Shin and Sin. When the dot appears over the left part of the letter, it is pronounced with an “s” sound – Sin. When the dot appears over the right part of the letter, it is pronounced with an “sh” sound – Shin. I like to think of these as identical twins, because without the dots they're physically impossible to tell apart. Only context can tell us which leg to put the dot over.



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*Leader notes*

**Tav (verses 169-176)**

**Key Talk Point:** Following a God who continues to seek

**Context/Comments:** The concluding stanza of Psalm 119 begins with a focus on how the psalmist will use his lips and tongue to praise and worship God, but amidst the praise are still the requests for understanding and deliverance according to His Word. The second half of Tav shifts more heavily toward requests as the psalmist asks twice for God's help (*azar*), first from His hand (v. 173) and second from His ordinances (v. 175).

In each of the final four stanzas, we saw a reference to salvation (vv. 146, 155, 166, and 174) and as we leave the psalmist, we see him still longing for the LORD's salvation. As much as the psalmist seeks God, there is something more. There is an incompleteness, an anticlimax if you will, at the end of Tav. For all his seeking, for all his remembering, for all his obedience, the psalmist still strays, in his own words "like a lost sheep," and without realizing it calls on Jesus, the Great Shepherd of the sheep, to seek and find him!

Tav is one of two Hebrew letters for our letter "T." The other is Teth.

**Discussion Questions:**

*How do the Shin and Tav stanzas look forward? What is hoped for in Shin and longed for in Tav?*

*What did you discover about the Hebrew word?*

*What is the emotional tone of these stanzas? Explain.*

*What practical benefits does the psalmist talk about in the Shin stanza?*

Week Six: **Ready for Every Tomorrow!**  
*Class pages*

*Notes* Why Be Ready for Every Tomorrow!

**ONE STEP FURTHER:**  
**Shalom**  
 What else does God's Word say about peace? Use chapters and verses as you answer this question. Record your findings below.

Having studied 175 verses of the psalmist's devotion to God and His Law, what do you make of verse 175?

Take some time to carefully read Luke 15:1-7 and reflect on its relationship to Psalm 119.

**FYI:**  
**Matthew 12:44**  
 "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and then he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."

For all the psalmist's devotion and love for God, he still needed a Savior... and His faithful God indeed went to a mission to seek and to save the lost.

*Sweeter than Chocolate!*  
 An Inductive Study of Psalm 119  
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**Digging Deeper . . .**  
 The Law that points to Jesus

If you have some extra time on your hands this week, research the ways Moses and the Law point to Jesus. If you have a blank book on your face right now or don't have adequate time, don't sweat it. Just move on to the final application questions and leave this for another day.

*Notes* Why Be Ready for Every Tomorrow!

**TRUE STORIES:**  
**Zacchaeus, Luke 19:1-10**  
 To get more details of the "tax collector," take special note of the last two verses. Record what you learn below.

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*Leader notes*

What difference will "great peace" make in your life today? In the lives of your friends?

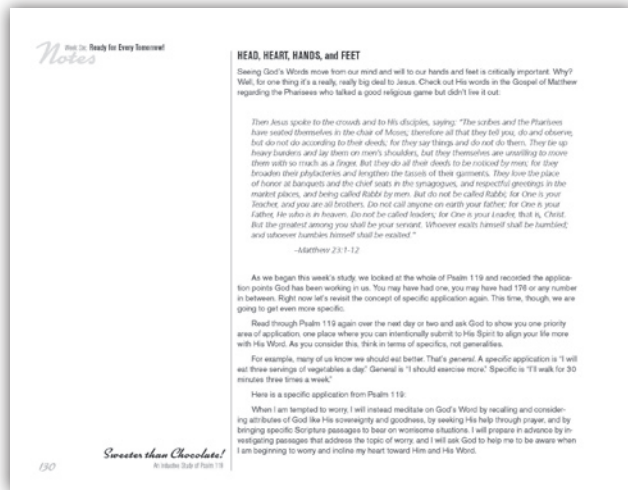
What characterizes the first half of the *Tav* stanza?

What characterizes the second half?

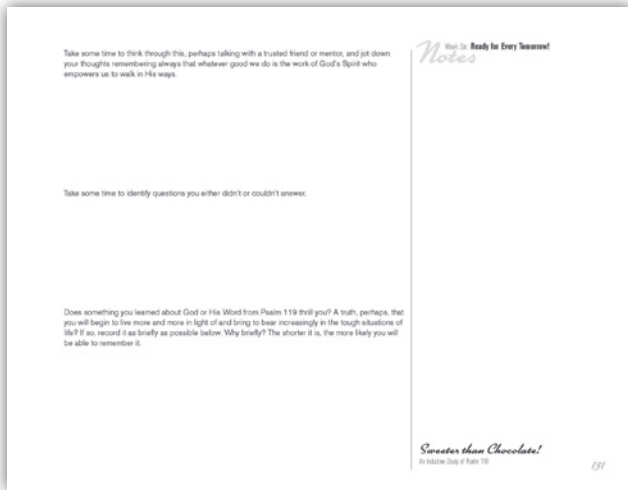
How does the last verse of the Psalm fit with the rest of God's story in both the Old and New Testaments?

**Live It:**

- He gives great peace.
- He keeps me from stumbling.
- He seeks me as a shepherd.



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*Leader notes*

**SEGMENT #4 LOOKING BACK, SUMMING UP, AND LIVING OUT**

*[pages 130-132]*

**Discussion Questions:**

Depending on the size of your class, consider breaking down into small groups for at least a portion of your final segment. During this time, try to guide your students toward specific action points, as opposed to general concepts. Broad principles are helpful, but they need to be applied to be effective. Keep pulling your class toward application. Start off this time by sharing your biggest takeaway from studying Psalm 119.

*Is there something you learned from Psalm 119 about God or His Word that thrills you? What is it?*

*Which stanzas stand out as most memorable to you? Why?*

*What truth has been most life-changing to you?*

*What truth has been the hardest for you to align with?*

*Of everything you have learned, what is the single most important truth you want to remember?*

*How will you remember it? How will you share what you have learned with others?*

**Next week:**

*Live it!*