

Psalm 119:9-16 • The Pure Way

Introduction

There are 9 different words used throughout Psalm 119 to describe God's "law" or "Word". Make note of their individual definition, each time they're used, and the context in which they're employed. These are not all synonyms that mean the same thing, but communicate something very specific.

1. **Law.** While this most certainly can mean the Bible in general, it's important to note that the Hebrew word for "law" is "torah", which is not just the formal name of the Law given through Moses, but also means "teaching" or "instruction". One of the amazing things to consider is that God provided the Bible as His instruction and personal teaching on how to live.
2. **Testimonies.** Think of this word in the context of "eye witness testimony". It's a powerful statement about the corroboration of the truth of all aspects of God's Word as provided by His personal witness of their detail, effects, and consequences.
3. **Precepts.** These are the responsibilities God has laid upon His people, requirements **AFTER** one has come to have a relationship with Him.
4. **Statutes.** These are specifically prescribed tasks or boundaries. They are things required (e.g., sacrifices, etc.) or establishing limiting guidelines (e.g. who to marry/associate with, etc.)
5. **Commandments.** These are those things God has spoken which detail the responsibilities of human beings to live in a covenant relationship with the Him. Especially in the Old Testament, commandments defined how Israel was to live in a covenant relationship with God, this being expanded upon in the New Testament.
6. **Ordinances.** In Hebrew this word is a derivative of "judgment". We might call this "case law". It's the verdicts or outcomes or formal decrees established based on resolving the situation brought before the court. It describes the practical application of the Law in situations not specifically detailed word for word so that we may understand how God's Word is applicable in every situation and that it provides no loopholes.
7. **Word.** This is a matter or cause spoken of directly by God.
8. **Ways.** The Hebrew word refers specifically to a well-traveled path or road. It's a reference to human beings' actions that lead to staying on or straying from God's path.
9. **Judgments.** Some things have been pre-ordained—declared from the outset—to result in a final outcome. For instance, those who do not accept God are already "judged" dead because their actions are leading to hell. It's a very strong set of boundaries and rules established by the Creator of the universe that provide the basis for all that follows.

Psalm 119 consists of 22 mini-sermons or expositions of these 9 different ways in which God has communicated His intention and direction for our life and how they interact in the life of the Believer. If you study any of these mini-sermons in view of the specific definitions provided above, you will discover that each has a specific teaching and is not just the same thought repeating over and over again.

⁹How can a young man keep his way pure?
By keeping it according to Your word.

[Read v.9]

Q: What is the biblical significance of the word “pure”?

A: It describes something that is sin-free, something not polluted by sin.

Q: What is identified as being kept pure or unpolluted by sin?

A: One’s “way”, the path on which one’s life has chosen to travel.

Q: Why specify “young man” and not just “man” or “everyone”?

A: “Young” often speaks of immaturity and/or inexperience. It’s a way of stating that if a young man can do this, anyone can too. It’s not a matter of age but obedience.

Q: So how is the path on which one has chosen to journey kept sin-pollution-free?

A: By keeping it according to the matters spoken by God, His Word. The word “keeping” is an action verb that speaks of our taking what we have heard and putting it into practice, not just passively listening.

Application: Do you struggle with a particular sin or sin in general because you “know” God’s Word but don’t actually “keep” it or put it into actual practice?

[Read v.10]

¹⁰With all my heart I have sought You;
Do not let me wander from Your commandments.

Q: Is it enough to seek and acknowledge God? According to this verse, what is the proper life response once we have found Him?

A: To take what was initiated as a desire of our heart and allow it to grow into obedience that never again strays from our covenant relationship with Him.

Q: What is the key word in this verse that dovetails with the last verse?

A: “Wander”. It’s building upon the initial question of how to keep one’s “way” pure, to stay on the right path and not wander from it.

Point: “Commandments”—the responsibilities God has communicated to His people to maintain a covenant relationship with Him—builds upon the “way” or life’s path on which they choose to travel.

[Read v.11]

¹¹Your word I have treasured in my heart,
That I may not sin against You.

Q: What is the goal of being established in God’s path, never straying from a covenant relationship with Him, and valuing His Word more than anything else?

A: “That I may not sin against You.”

Q: Why is this important? Isn’t “sin” just an “observation” that we’re not perfect and occasionally stray a bit?

A: The biblical definition of sin is to be polluted and therefore unable to come into the presence of God. A person with sin is sometimes described as “filthy”. God uses the terms “abhor” and “hate” to describe how He feels about sin—and how **WE** ought to feel about it as well.

Application: What does your heart treasure most? Is it a person, a possession, a job, your family? Jesus said, “for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:21) What would happen if you treasured His Word above everything else?

¹²Blessed are You, O LORD;
Teach me Your statutes.

[Read v.12]

Q: How does this fit with the overall theme of how to daily travel the pure path of God?

A: It's an appeal to learn from God the tasks and boundaries that must be maintained to stay on His path.

Application: Do you even **WANT** to know the tasks and boundaries? Are you traveling a path that you've bothered to stop and ask God to identify the duties and limitations associated with it?

¹³With my lips I have told of
All the ordinances of Your mouth.

[Read v.13]

Q: How are we to imitate God in the course of our walk?

A: By repeating what He has spoken. We don't merely agree with His decisions but espouse them, confirm them, testify to them our self.

¹⁴I have rejoiced in the way of Your
testimonies,
As much as in all riches.

[Read v.14]

Q: Given the definitions of "way" and "testimonies" provided above, how might you re-phrase the first part of this verse?

A: "I have rejoiced in the right path to travel, confirmed by Your personal testimony that it's indeed the right way to travel." God Himself is an eye witness of the validity of the way to walk in Him.

Application: If you were to list all your assets, where would keeping God's Word rate?

¹⁵I will meditate on Your precepts
And regard Your ways.

[Read v.15]

Q: What is significant about the term "meditate"? What does it denote on our part?

A: It's not just having knowledge—even all-encompassing wisdom—but taking the responsibilities He has assigned to us before Him in constant prayer to not just understand them, but to constantly seek His strength for compliance with them.

Q: What is significant about the term "regard"?

A: When the train crossing signal sounds, we "regard" the warning and don't pass over the tracks until the train—the danger—is past. We clearly know the benefits and penalties of complying or not. The same with having "regard" for His path. We are to come to understand the benefits and penalties so well of staying on His path that we would never want to stray, just as we do not want to be crushed by a passing train.

Application: How much of God's Word do you make a part of your prayer life? Do you come to Him acknowledging the responsibilities He's given and your need to act on them according to His parameters?

¹⁶I shall delight in Your statutes;
I shall not forget Your word.

[Read v.16]

Q: Now why would we “delight”—exhibit joyful emotion—over the tasks and boundaries that He has assigned to us?

A: They keep us on the right path. Obedience eliminates the burdens of sin and all its baggage and the effort required to return from it to the right path.

Q: What is the benefit of not forgetting His Word, to always remember what He has spoken?

A: It's much more difficult to stray from the path when it's in the foreground of our memory.

Overall Application

- *Taking all these points as a whole, does it seem impossible for us to follow God? If it does, is that because there's something you really don't want to give up or follow?*
- *How will you incorporate the tasks and responsibilities of your spiritual walk into your prayer life?*
- *How will you incorporate more and more of His Word into your speech, walk, actions, and decisions?*