Discipleship 9wk Challenge - Psalm 119 (various verses)

Intro –

* Illustration - Pulling over the side of the road to figure out where something is compared to trying to figure it out while in busy traffic
* The discipline we are going to talk about today gets to this same idea – that of stepping away from the busyness of life to stop and be with God and hear from Him in His word.
* Psalm 119 is the longest chapter of the Bible.
  + It has 176 verses, broken down into 8 verse sections. The entire chapter is about God’s word, about the importance, helpfulness and sacredness of scripture.
  + Rest assured; we are not going to cover 176 verses this morning. However, we are going to look at different themes that do come up in this chapter in relation to scripture.
  + And one of the biggest thing this chapter talks about is our discipline for today – meditating on scripture.

**Followers of Jesus must meditate on God’s Word:**

* Meditation is directly mentioned 10x’s in Psalm 119. A few are (read only highlighted):
  + I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. Psalm 119:15
  + Even though princes sit plotting against me, your servant will meditate on your statutes. 119:23
  + Make me understand the way of your precepts, and I will meditate on your wondrous works. Psalm 119:27
  + I will lift up my hands toward your commandments, which I love, and I will meditate on your statutes. Psalm 119:48
  + When I think of your rules from of old, I take comfort, O LORD. Psalm 119:52
  + Let the insolent be put to shame, because they have wronged me with falsehood; as for me, I will meditate on your precepts. Psalm 119:78
  + Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day. Psalm 119:97
  + I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation. 119:99
  + Hold me up, that I may be safe and have regard for your statutes continually! Psalm 119:117
  + My eyes are awake before the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promise. Psalm 119:148
* Biblical meditation is not the same thing as modern/Eastern meditation –
  + **This is not about being silent, nor is it about disconnecting our hearts and minds.** 
    - “Meditation as popularly taught by the Eastern philosophies tells you to empty your mind. But that’s the exact opposite of what the Scriptures say. Biblical meditation means filling your mind with the truth that God has revealed.” – Howard Hendricks
    - “It’s not a silent activity, but it is a low and slow recitation of the Scriptures, whereby we’re actually thinking deeply about the significance of those Scriptures for our own lives and for the lives of others.” – Mark Furato
    - “Hebrew meditation is not disengaging the mind. It’s engaging the mind so that we understand the Scriptures and so that we know how to put those Scriptures to work in our lives and the lives of other people. In other words, meditation is part of the process of living out a holy life before God. That’s part of the blessed life, the truly happy life.” – Mark Furato
  + I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your wonders of old. I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds. Psalm 77:11–12
    - Meditation is about actively using our minds.
    - Meditation is about intentionally filling our minds with Gods’ Word.

**What does it mean to meditate on God’s Word?**

* To meditate is to seek to understand God’s Word –
  + **Meditating moves us from merely reading the words to grasping them.** 
    - “one is to bring one’s whole person—body, soul, and mind—to focus on God, his works, and especially his Word, which tells about both his person and his work.” – Kaiser & Silva
    - Meditating on God’s word does not start by asking, “What does this passage mean to me?” No, we begin with, “What is God trying to communicate here?”
  + **Psalm 119 tells us:** 
    - I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word. Psalm 119:16
    - I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have given me life. Psalm 119:93
    - Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law. Psalm 119:18
    - Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain! Psalm 119:36
    - Put false ways far from me and graciously teach me your law! Psalm 119:129
  + **Think about things that are mentioned in those verses:** 
    - “ppen my eyes” – acknowledgement it’s not me, it’s His word. Prayerful request of, “help me to understand!”
    - “I will never forget your statutes/precepts” – the need to memorize
    - “incline my heart” – willingness to be molded by God’s word, let by the Lord.
  + **Meditation helps us to grasp what God is saying.**
    - Involves reading actively – reading slowly, making observations, letting the text speak, reading multiple times.
    - Involves asking questions – need to be able to look things up (suggest resources)
    - Involves letting God speak – not reading me into the text, but the text into me
* To meditate is to reflect on the implications of God’s Word –
  + **The Hebrew word at its core means, “to speak”**
    - The word itself means to remember, take to heart, consider; to ponder,
    - “The Hebrew word used for meditate in the psalms means to “talk to oneself,” implying mental activities such as contemplating, pondering, considering, remembering, and reflecting upon.” – Daryle Aaron
    - I need to understand God’s word, but to reflect is to think about the scripture implications.
  + **Psalm 119 and other texts encourages us to reflect on the Word of God:** 
    - Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart, who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways! Psalm 119:2-3
    - When I told of my ways, you answered me; teach me your statutes! Psalm 119:26
    - Let your steadfast love comfort me according to your promise to your servant. Let your mercy come to me, that I may live; for your law is my delight. Psalm 119:76-77
    - Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer. Psalm 19:14 –
    - This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Joshua 1:8
    - In both of those last two – words of my mouth, His word shall not depart from my mouth 🡪 this gets to the idea of talking through God’s word.
    - I’m saying the text multiple times, slowly, pondering its implications
  + **Reflection helps me to grasp the significance of what I understand.** 
    - I consider the direction and benefits of God’s word:
    - My soul melts away for sorrow; strengthen me according to your word! Psalm 119:28
    - My soul longs for your salvation; I hope in your word. Psalm 119:81
    - When I think of your rules from of old, I take comfort, O LORD. Psalm 119:52
    - I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. Psalm 119:11
    - My heart is encouraged, I receive comfort.
    - My life is guided, I’m giving direction and conviction.
* To meditate is to act on God’s Word –
  + **The Bible isn’t given to us so we can get a daily fix of spiritual warm-fuzzies.** 
    - It’s meant to change us – more and more into the image of Jesus. That means it helps us understand Him and the life He has for us.
    - If I truly understand the Word of God, then I’m doing what it says. If I’m not doing anything from it – then I wasn’t listening, understanding and pondering.
    - Meditation always leads to action, behavior, conviction, etc .
  + **Listen to what Psalm 119 says about this:** 
    - I have chosen the way of faithfulness; I set your rules before me. I cling to your testimonies, O LORD; let me not be put to shame! I will run in the way of your commandments when you enlarge my heart! Psalm 119:30-32
    - I will keep your law continually, forever and ever, and I shall walk in a wide place, for I have sought your precepts. Psalm 119:44-45
    - When I think on my ways, I turn my feet to your testimonies;  I hasten and do not delay to keep your commandments. Psalm 119:59-60
      * I have chosen faithfulness, I will keep your words, I turn my way to you.
      * There is a 1:1 correlation between engage the word of God and living it.
      * Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. James 1:22
    - I hold back my feet from every evil way,in order to keep your word. I do not turn aside from your rules, for you have taught me. How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way. Psalm 119:101-104
      * We need 101-104 to describe us as followers!
      * Do we do everything we need to do to be faithful to God’s Word?
      * Does God’s word taste “sweet like honey” to us because we’ve experienced the life it leads us in?
  + Illustration – thinking of walking in the woods at night in the dark –
    - \*\*\*Have a headlamp or flashlight on stage\*\*\*
    - Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Psalm 119:105

**How to spend time meditating on God’s Word.**

**The 15minutes a day challenge for the next week 🡪**

* Need to have a time and place –
  + Getting alone with God was part of Jesus’ regular rhythms:
    - But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed. Luke 5:16
    - Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Mark 1:35
  + Set an appointment in your calendar –
    - When will your time be?
    - Where will your time be? (no distractions)
* What to do during the 15minutes:
  + Daryle Aaron gives a model for how to meditate on God’s Word (I’m going to customize/edit/tweak this next week – but it gives everyone a starting point):
    - **Set aside adequate time and space.** Fruitful meditation cannot be rushed. Choose a time when interruptions and distractions are minimal, if not avoided altogether. If at all possible, the beginning of the day is good because you can then continue to carry the benefits of your meditation with you throughout the day. Choose a place where you can be alone and other responsibilities of the day will not divert your attention.
    - **Choose a biblical word, phrase, or verse as the focus of your meditation.** As with verses you choose to memorize, these should meet a particular need you have (for comfort, trust, encouragement, challenge). Keep the section of Scripture small in order to concentrate your focus. Ideally, you should have memorized the text, or you can memorize it as you meditate on it.
    - **Begin with prayer.** Ask God to work in your thinking during your time of meditation. Ask him to reveal himself to you and to draw you closer to him. Ask him to open your eyes to the truth that is in his Word. Ask him to help you apply his Word to your life. Ask him to transform you through meditation on his Word.
    - **Think about the meaning of the text.** It would be helpful to have studied the text before your time of meditation so that you have a general understanding of it. During your meditation, then, your goal is to go deeper in that understanding and to have your eyes opened to things that you had not seen or understood before. What is God saying through the text? Why is it important?
    - **Think about application of the text.** In what practical ways can you apply that biblical truth to your life immediately? Write down your thoughts regarding meaning and application. Jot down questions regarding the text that may take additional study and thought to answer.
    - **End your time with prayer.** Thank God for his presence and ask him to help you apply his Truth to your life as you go through the day.
  + Another option – Lectio365