

SAMPLE LESSON
NOT FOR RESALE

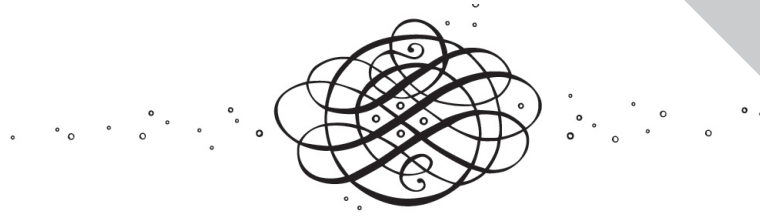
Falling in Love Again with Your Lord

A THISTLEBEND DISCIPLESHIP STUDY



Focus Scripture

PSALM 63



SAMPLE LESSON
NOT FOR RESALE

Falling in Love Again with Your Lord

Focus Scripture: Psalm 63

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A Thistlebend Discipleship Study



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An Important Note:

Information about our lecture audios and videos,
including their online passwords, can be found on the
last page of this workbook.



Earnestly I Seek You

O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you. (Ps. 63:1a)

God Almighty, the maker of heaven and earth, has a love for us that our hearts will never fully grasp on this side of heaven. It is a love that surpasses human comprehension. God has created within us a deep need for Him and His love. In our quest to fulfill that need, we often chase after everything but Him, filling that place with cheap substitutes and defiling what was meant only for Him. We become pacified for the moment, deceptively full but hopelessly unsatisfied. If we do not seek after Him—if He is not our sole pursuit—we can find ourselves lonely and isolated. We are left longing and empty yet again. The truth is, we are unable to absorb God's love apart from God Himself opening our hearts and our minds to Him. He promises in His Word, *"You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart"* (Jer. 29:13). God wants us to find our very purpose and fulfillment in Him, for we were made to glorify Him and enjoy Him fully. David makes this his holy ambition, proclaiming from the depths of his soul, *"O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you"* (Ps. 63:1a). May this be our holy ambition!

Ask yourself, "Is God, my God? Do I believe that He is God Most High, worthy of all of my worship and praise? Do I believe He will meet me right where I am, satisfy my deepest longings, and bring me into the holy, intimate, love relationship for which I was created?" These are critical questions. Take a moment to consider them. As you reflect, you do not have to have all the answers, but jot down your thoughts in the margin. Share them with the Lord. Believe that He will meet you right where you are and help you earnestly seek Him. We want to seek God as David describes and follow our Shepherd in His Word. This is essential, because if we are not careful, we can find ourselves on a misguided course heading toward the wrong destination. The only path to pursue God is by His grace through His Word. The Son Himself is the Word! *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"* (Jn. 1:1). God's Word is truth, Spirit, and life (Jn. 6:33). We are not alone in this pursuit because the Father and Son have sent us the Spirit.



“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. 14 He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. 15 All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you” (Jn. 16:13-15).

We pursue a loving and intimate relationship with God by spending time with Him—reading, meditating on, praying through, and obeying His Word. Paul says that all of our prayers must be continual and come from a heart full of gratitude (1 Thes. 5:17, Phil. 4:6, Col. 4:2). And obedience to God’s Word is the mark of those who truly love God (Jn. 14:24-25). As we draw near to God in this way, He draws near to us. He keeps us in close communion with Him, and we come to know Him more and more. We are enabled by grace through faith to press on in the face of difficulty believing that He will accomplish His work in our lives. Without faith, we cannot please God (Heb. 11:6). It is important to keep in mind that our earnest efforts may or may not produce the results we desire. We must wait on God. He is the One who causes the growth in His time and in His way (1 Cor. 3:7) as we diligently pursue Him.

Be prepared, those who resolve to earnestly seek God will encounter resistance. We can lose step with the Lord, be detoured, and even delayed by various distractions from within and without. Listen to Christian’s exhortation in *Pilgrim’s Progress*, “Let nothing that is on this side of eternal life get inside you. Above all, take care of your own hearts, and resist the lusts that tempt you, for your hearts ‘are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.’ Set your faces like a flint; you have all the power of Heaven and earth on your side.”¹ We must guard against our sinful default responses and habits that hinder our spiritual growth: misplaced trust, misguided ambition, and misaligned priorities.

Misplaced trust hinders our pursuit and growth. Without realizing it, we put our trust in our perspective, our feelings, or our way of doing things rather than the Word and promises of God. We may know His Word well and still not live according to it. We lean on our understanding rather than trusting the Lord wholeheartedly, demonstrating our unbelief in our disobedience. God repeatedly promises that He will provide all our needs (Phil. 4:19, Mt. 6:25-34, 2 Cor. 9:8). Yet, when we face suffering—our husband loses his job, our daughter’s test score indicates she has a learning disability, a friend betrays our trust, or we simply get a flat tire—we panic. Anxious thoughts and feelings flood our minds: “God has forgotten me. God doesn’t love me. I am all alone!”

What is more, we put trust in our own power. Years ago, I fervently tried to seek the Lord, but a barrier blocked my way. I was afraid to look at my sin because I could not fathom that anyone could change my heart, not even God. I had confessed my sins so many times, and I thought, “No one else is



a sinner like me!” Hiding and repressing it was the only thing I knew to do while I tried harder and harder to be good. All the effort in the world would not wash away my sin and transform my heart. If we seek God in our own strength, we are sure to fail. If righteousness was achievable by good works or excellent performance, Christ’s suffering and death was unnecessary. My trust was not in the Lord; it was in myself. We are exhorted in Proverbs 3:5-7, “*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. 6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. 7 Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.*” My misguided trust had detoured me and imprisoned me for decades.

Misguided ambition seduces us and detours us far off course. We must ask ourselves why we do not fervently pursue the Lord. What are we striving for? We cannot pursue two opposing goals. What is competing for the affection of our hearts? Is it self-approval, control, human relationships, financial security, health, or success? Why do we compare ourselves to others? We ought to probe our hearts with questions that will unearth our idols, such as, “Why do I compare myself to that other woman? Am I looking for self-approval? Or do I want to appear superior and attractive to people around me? Do I want the attention of the guy who is interested in her? Do I want reassurance from her praise because I respect her?” Our desires drive our actions, and we must consciously choose to cherish Christ instead of ambitiously chasing the temporal things of this world.

Misaligned priorities divide our hearts and keep us from seeking God wholeheartedly. We consciously (or unconsciously) “put God in His place” and marginalize Him, making Him just a part of our lives instead of the *LORD* of our lives. We sideline Him and turn what was meant to be a relationship into a list of rules, an acquisition of knowledge, a life philosophy, or even membership in a heavenly club. When we make God a means to an end, other things in our lives become unbalanced. Hidden idols in our hearts distract us. But when our love relationship with the Lord is central, the eyes of our hearts are fixed on Him, and all else will fall into its rightful place.

Discerning our misplaced trust, misguided ambition, and misaligned priorities can be difficult. Scripture commands that we examine ourselves, yet we do not want to assess our spiritual condition without the Lord’s help. We must humbly bring our questions to Him and rely on the Holy Spirit to reveal truth. Let us draw near to God and ask Him to knit our hearts to His. He will mold us and shape us as we keep our eyes fixed upon Christ, the author and perfecter of our faith (Heb. 12:2).

The Lord is presiding over every step of our journey. The more we get to know Him, the more He may surprise us. He is more loving, caring, and present than we could ever imagine. His plans exceed our own; God’s ways are not our ways (Is. 55:8), and He works all things together for our good



and His glory, according to His eternal purposes (Rom. 8). His actions and answers may not match our expectations, but we can trust His perfect love. Our God always knows and does what is best for us. By faith, enter your relationship with Him expecting Him to answer the desires of your heart. He promises us that whatever we ask in His name, He will do it. *“Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. 4 Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart”* (Ps. 37:3-4). May you love the Lord with all your heart, soul, and mind, and may your relationship with the Lord far exceed and transform every other relationship in your life.

On your journey to “fall in love again with your Lord,” be intentional and make a commitment to pursue an intimate relationship with Him. Designate a place and dedicate a special time to daily be alone with the Lord. Ask the Lord for His help to do this. Also, if you miss your time with Him or your regular time does not work on a particular day, do not beat yourself up, but do not ignore it either. Make a “date” for another time that day. “Earnestly I seek you” sounds like a simple thing to say, but it is significant. David made a conscious decision of faith, in keeping with God’s Word, that there was one thing he would seek after with his all. David determined that no matter what was happening in his world or who and what were screaming for his attention, he would focus all of his being toward this one purpose. No matter what anyone else said was important, he made time to be with God and would *earnestly* seek after Him.

Remember, your relationship with God does not happen just in those solitary moments of quiet, it happens as you live your life, moment by moment with Him. Each day as you close your book and end your quiet time, ask the Lord to keep the ears of your heart open. Walk with the Lord, carefully listening to Him, obeying His Word, and asking Him to teach you along the way. Remember that God wants to speak to you through His Word to encourage and strengthen you. Be alert and attentive, because the Holy Spirit may remind you of Scripture to guide and direct you as you sit in your house, go grocery shopping, clean the kitchen, drive to soccer practice, sit at your desk, or lead a meeting.

Allow the Comforter to love you, care for you, speak to your heart, and encourage you. Do not hesitate to talk to Him, even about silly things. Lean upon Him and draw near to Him. Put away distractions, long lists of *to-do*’s, and negative thoughts of condemnation, fear, and comparison. Meditate on Psalm 63:1 over and over: *“O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you.”* Make these words the prayer of your heart.



If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. (Jn. 15:7) You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. (Jn. 15:16)

There is no way we can love the Lord in our own strength, no matter how hard we try or how many times someone urges us to do so. As you close your day today, take a moment to pray through the suggested prayer below.

O God, I want you, and you alone, to be my God. I want to fervently seek after you and love you with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength. By your grace, help me desire you more than the things of this world and overcome my sinful habits that impede my spiritual growth: misplaced trust, misguided ambitions, and misaligned priorities. I want to remain close by your side all along the way. Lift my head and fix my gaze upon you that I may behold you in the sanctuary to see your power and glory. I want to walk in a manner worthy of the gospel, stand firm against the darkness, cling to you, and trust your mighty hand and tender loving care.

Before you close your time today designate a place and dedicate a special time to daily be alone with the Lord. Planning ahead is an important step. Ask the Lord for His help. Remember, if you miss your time with Him or your regular time doesn't work on a particular day, do not beat yourself up, but do not ignore it either. Record your place and plan below.

Important Note: Our study on days four and five will take more time. It will be time very well spent and profoundly impact your relationship with the Lord and His Word. You may want to adjust your schedule to complete it.



L o r d , I W a n t t o K n o w Y o u !

D A Y T W O

Opening Reflection: If we want a deep and intimate relationship with God, we must get to know Him the way David did. God made it possible for us to know Him by revealing Himself in the Scriptures — the Bible—and giving us the Holy Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit, He gives us the ability to understand His Word and by it to know and love Him, granting us the mind and heart of Christ. However, if we are to have a deep relationship with Him, we must seek Him, listen carefully to Him, and follow Him. Ever since God revealed Himself to us He has included a call to hear, know, and obey out of love. If we want Him to be our All in all, we must pursue *Him* as our All in all. As God’s representative, Moses conveyed the Lord’s instructions to the Israelites so that they might know *Him*, not just the law, but *Him* and His heart for them. Read the following passage and listen to God’s heart for His people:

Deuteronomy 6:1-6

Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the rules—that the LORD your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, 2 that you may fear the LORD your God, you and your son and your son’s son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long. 3 Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey. 4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. 5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6 And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

What are the Lord’s instructions to Israel in verses 4-6? Write them word for word. It may seem like busy work, but meditating upon God’s Word as you write helps take His Word to heart.

According to verses 1-3, what did God want His people to do? Why?



We have just read one of the pivotal passages in the Old Testament called the *Shema*.¹ In it, God paints a vivid picture of Himself: His authority, His character, and His care for His people. Imagine for a moment that you are sitting at the feet of Moses, and that Jehovah—the Great I AM, the God of the universe—is speaking to you through him in this passage. Ask the Lord to meet you right where you are.

How does this passage describe God's relationship with His people?

How does this passage relate to you?

How does this passage describe the people's relationship with God?

How does your life align with this description?



In the Old Testament, the law refers to decrees found in the first five books of the Bible, the stipulations God gave the nation of Israel when He entered into a covenant relationship with them. Understanding the law helps us see God's heart in the law. Professor and modern theologian Dr. Thomas Schreiner writes, "The Bible isn't a random collection of laws, moral principles, and stories. It is a story that goes somewhere; it is the story of redemption, the story of God's kingdom."²

As Christians, we are not under the law, however the law still reveals crucial truths about God's moral character helping us to know Him. Let us take a closer look at the law. The law was a gift to God's people. It pointed them to Jesus. Paul tells us, "*the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. 26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ*" (Gal. 3:24-26 NASB). We are not made right with God by obeying the law, but through faith in Jesus! And in Christ, Paul argues, we are free from the law. But this does not mean that we can do whatever we want. When we put our faith in Jesus, God writes His character on our hearts (Jer. 31:33) and gives us the power to live for Him. In other words, He gives us the heart of Christ so we see the law through the lens of Christ. He literally writes His law on our hearts! (2 Cor. 3:3, Ezek. 11:19, 36:26, Jer. 31:33, Heb. 8:10).

God uses His law in our lives even now. The law reveals God's holy character and our shortcomings. Paul said that it was the law that showed him his sin, "*I would never have known that coveting is wrong if the law had not said, 'You must not covet'*" (Rom. 7:7). In seeing God (and ourselves)

in the Old Testament, we grow in understanding Him and His holiness and gain a much deeper appreciation of what he has done for us in Christ.



We are going to take a look at the law as given in the Ten Commandments, which are recorded in Deuteronomy 5:6-21. Look up this passage in your Bible and list the commandments.

Deuteronomy 5:6-21

1	6
2	7
3	8
4	9
5	10

Think through the Ten Commandments. Do you think they reveal a heart of condemnation or a heart of love? What do these commands reveal about the heart of God? (Review Dt. 6:3-4.)

Choose one of the commandments and explain how it might be an expression of God's love for us.

Think about some of your parents' rules when you were growing up. How did you feel about those rules? Why?

If you have children, what are some of the rules you put in place to protect your children? Why do you, or did you, have these rules? Why do you think it is important to enforce them?



The Ten Commandments express God's righteous love for us. Our parents' rules when we were children also demonstrated their love for us as well. We may not have appreciated them at the time, but our perspective changed as we grew to see their protection. The Ten Commandments also help us discern right from wrong, based on God's character as He really is and not merely what we make Him out to be. He is God, our Creator, but He is also our Father and Beloved because of Christ. We are able to approach Him at anytime, and when we do, we are blessed. Read the Psalm below and underline the blessings available to us as we earnestly seek Him by following Him and obeying His Word. There is no greater satisfaction on earth. Close in prayer by thanking the Lord for His heart of love for you. Ask Him to reveal Himself to you, filling you with love for Him and His Word.

Psalm 19:7-11

- 7 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul;
the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;*
- 8 the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;*
- 9 the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;
the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether.*
- 10 More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.*
- 11 Moreover, by them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.*

TAKE THE TRUTH TO HEART

Look to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of your faith (Heb. 12:2), and choose one Scripture from today that the Lord is using to *renew* your mind and *transform* your heart (Rom. 12:2).

How is God using this Scripture to teach, instruct, reprove, correct, encourage, or train you (2 Tm. 3:16-17)?

Meditate upon this Scripture today. Take God's Word to heart. Submit to it and humbly live it out. Remember God's love in the gospel, your death with Christ, and His life in you.

Take a moment to work on your weekly memory verse.



L o r d , I W a n t t o H e a r Y o u !

D A Y T H R E E

Opening Reflection: God chose a people for Himself out of all of the peoples of the earth and made a covenant with them. He continually reminded the Israelites of His promise to be their one and only God, who saved them from their enemies and who prepared a lasting home for them: *“I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians”* (Ex. 6:7); *“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery”* (Ex. 20:2); *“And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people”* (Lv. 26:12). The Israelites were His people, His treasured and holy possession. God faithfully kept His covenant of love with them, and rightly desired their love and obedience in return.

According to the apostle Paul, God wants us to learn how to relate to Him by observing His relationship with Israel. *“Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come”* (1 Cor. 10:11). God has given us promises as well: love, provision, protection, and deliverance into paradise. Even though God’s promises are not contingent upon our performance, He does require that we participate.

Our participation in His promises begins with faithful listening. He calls us to hear so that we can obey. Moses pleaded with God’s people to listen in this way: hearing by faith and responding to God’s kindness with loving obedience.

Read again the words of Deuteronomy 6:4-9. The *Shema*’ was repeated often by the people of Israel. Be careful not to skim these words because of their familiarity, but take them to heart.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. 5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6 And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

As we review the Lord's instructions to Israel and to us in verse 5, do you wonder if we even can keep this command? If we can't, should we even try? Why or why not?



Hear. Has someone ever asked you, “Can you hear me?” Or have you ever been on the receiving end of, “You’re not listening to me!”? Perhaps someone has told you, “Heed this warning . . .” What is the difference in English between the words *hear*, *listen*, and *heed*? In the first sentence, the meaning is pretty basic. The questioner simply wants to know if you can hear her voice. But in the second statement, the meaning of *listen* is more charged. The person is implying you are not paying attention, or perhaps you are not understanding what is being said. The third example, with *heed*, is the most pointed, because heeding something is paying strict attention and doing what is asked. It is hearing to obey. All three English meanings are wrapped up in the single Hebrew word, *shema*, the word Moses uses in Deuteronomy 6:4 when he commands, “*Hear, O Israel!*” *Shema* means “to hear with attention or obedience, to give undivided listening attention.”³

The prophet Moses spoke for God. All true prophets were men chosen by God as His spokesmen to His people. The prophets declared God's promises, predicted future events, and called the people to return to their covenant obligations. All of the Israelites listened to God's words through Moses, but not many truly *heard* him. Which kind of listener are you? Ask the Lord to help you listen and follow Him with undivided attention and humble obedience.



Love. Deuteronomy 6:5 commands, “*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.*” The word translated *love* in Deuteronomy 6 is the Hebrew word *ahav*, meaning “to love, desire, delight, like, be fond of, covet, be beloved, amiable, be a passionate lover.”⁴ This word can be used for a whole range of things, from the love between a man and woman (Eccl. 9:9 and Sg. 3:1-4) to a love of food (Gen. 27:14). Our English word *love*, with all of its vagueness and various intensities, corresponds well to the Hebrew word *ahav*.⁵ In Deuteronomy, the command “*Love the LORD your God*” occurs many times (for example, 6:5; 11:1, 13, 22; 19:9; 30:6). The psalmist employs the word many times in Psalm 119 to express his delight in God's Word. Sometimes the intensity of the word can reach a divine level when used to describe the way that God loves us, as when God says in Jeremiah: “*I have loved you with an everlasting love*” (Jer. 31:3).

The love God commands in Deuteronomy 6 entails giving your full devotion to the One who alone is God. The love required is not mere outward obedience; but a deep affection and loyalty. *Ahav* is true love. This love is to be demonstrated: 1) with all your heart—with all your thoughts, feelings, emotions, and desires; 2) with all your soul—with all your life, your being; 3) with all your might—with all your strength and effort. With everything in you, you are to love God.

What do you love? Who do you love? Consider your words, actions, feelings, and thoughts. What do they reveal about what you love?

Are you deceived by entertaining, or pursuing a rival love? Write a short prayer on a separate sheet of paper asking the Lord to help you truly love Him and to reveal any areas in your life where you may be deceived by your emotions, intellectual beliefs, or rituals.



God's Lovingkindness. If you were to look at all the instances of *ahav* in the Hebrew of the Old Testament, you would notice that while it can be used of God's love from time to time, it usually refers to the way humans love someone or something. In speaking of God's love, the Old Testament typically uses the term *hesed*. Isaiah 54:10 helps us see the special nuance of this word: "*For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, but My lovingkindness [hesed] will not be removed from you, and My covenant of peace will not be shaken*" (NASB 1995). This kind of love is more constant, more stable than the mountains themselves.⁶ God's covenant love is absolutely unwavering, unconditional, and unchanging. It remains loyal to the objects of His love.

Take a few moments to think on God's faithful lovingkindness (*hesed*) to you, as the psalmist did in Psalm 48:9: "*We have thought on your lovingkindness [hesed], O God*" (NASB 1995). Read the following psalm of David's as he speaks of the Lord's steadfast love—His lovingkindness.

Psalm 36:5-12

How has God demonstrated His lovingkindness (*hesed*) to you in the past? At present?

How does it make you feel that God's love is absolutely loyal to you and will never change that allegiance? How might that change your image of God and who He is to you?

Why is it important for you to hear God's love for you in His Word? Ask Him to give you ears to hear and a heart to receive His love. If you were to take these truths to heart—that God loves you perfectly and faithfully—what might that mean for your life today? How might that change your thoughts and priorities?



What adjustments might you need to make in your thinking and prioritizing in light of God's steadfast love? The Old Testament prophets asked hard questions of God's people, spoke the truth plainly, and gave stern warnings intended to draw God's people back to His covenant. But most people did not hear, evidenced by their disobedience to His law. They often abused and killed the prophets. How will you respond to God's promise of steadfast love? Our sin corrupt flesh rebels against God and His Word. Ask the Spirit to illuminate your heart. Ask the Lord to open your ears to hear and your eyes to see what may be keeping you from drawing closer to Him. What can distract you or pull you away from listening to God and focusing on Him? What "messages" do you find yourself hearing instead of hearing God and heeding His Word in your life? Make notes beside each category.

Thoughts or fears

Goals, achievements, dreams, or ideals

Pressures from the church or the culture

Anger or frustrations

News headlines

Take these things to the Lord in prayer. Ask Him to help you hear His Word, trust His heart, and believe in His love for you so that you can earnestly seek after Him.

TAKE THE TRUTH TO HEART

Look to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of your faith (Heb. 12:2), and choose one Scripture from today that the Lord is using to *renew* your mind and *transform* your heart (Rom. 12:2).

How is God using this Scripture to teach, instruct, reprove, correct, encourage, or train you (2 Tm. 3:16-17)?

Meditate upon this Scripture today. Take God's Word to heart. Submit to it and humbly live it out. Remember God's love in the gospel, your death with Christ, and His life in you.

Take a moment to work on your weekly memory verse.



L o r d , I W i l l S e e k Y o u !

D A Y F O U R

Opening Reflection: The Lord commands us to seek after Him with all of our being, which includes praying and pouring out our hearts to Him. His Word tells us He hears the prayers of His people. God answered David's pleas, and He tells us that He will answer ours as well. Further still, the Father is the One who enables our hearts to love Him and who gives us the desire to seek Him.

Jeremiah 31:33-34

But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, "Know the LORD," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

Settled trust in God's transforming work both frees us from striving and shakes us from lethargy, to seek God wholeheartedly. With such confidence David desired to hear and obey God's words. Listen to his heart as you read the following excerpt of Psalm 119.

Psalm 119:1-16

Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD! 2 Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart, 3 who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways! 4 You have commanded your precepts to be kept diligently. 5 Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes! 6 Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments. 7 I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn your righteous rules. 8 I will keep your statutes; do not utterly forsake me! 9 How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. 10 With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! 11 I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. 12 Blessed are you, O LORD; teach me your statutes! 13 With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth. 14 In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. 15 I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. 16 I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.

Who does David say is blessed and how does he describe them in (vv. 1-3)?

Underline the words David used to refer to the law in the above passage. David pleads that his ways would be established to keep God's commands (v. 5). What would be your plea? How would you describe your heart? Is it lukewarm, apathetic, or disinterested in seeking after the Lord? Do you need to confess anything to the Lord?



God's Spirit works mightily through His Word transforming our desires by faith. Today and tomorrow we will immerse ourselves in Psalm 119, a celebration of God's law of love. This psalm is such a beautiful picture of the law of love, and we want to saturate ourselves in it. The psalmist, believed by many to be David, wrote this psalm as an acrostic poem. It has 22 sections, each beginning with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet in order. Today, will closely examine the first five sections.

Let us thoughtfully enter this psalm as we might enter a quiet garden. As you linger here, you will find much beauty to explore in David's view of Scripture. Make each of David's petitions and proclamations prayers for your heart, mind, and soul. Our study today and tomorrow will take more time—worthwhile time—than normal, so you may want to adjust your schedule to complete it. For today, make lists from verses 1-48 under the following three categories. I will help you get started in the process by listing the verses for the first category and giving an example for each category.

Psalm 119:17-48 (49-88)

1. Record David's **petitions, requests, and pleas** in verses 17-48. (If you are able, continue this process for verses 49-88.)

v. 17 Example: *Deal bountifully with your servant, that I may live and keep your word.*

v. 18

v. 19

v. 22

v. 25

v. 26

v. 27

v. 28

v. 29

v. 31

v. 33

v. 34

v. 35

v. 36

v. 37

v. 38

v. 39

v. 41

v. 43

We are unaware, even blind, to our sin and hard-heartedness. May God have mercy on us and answer our petitions and proclamations. We can be so thankful for the wisdom and love God gave to David and his awareness of his need for God to work in his heart.

2. Record what David says he **has done or has determined to do with regard to the law** in verses 17-48. Enjoy the great rewards for spending time in God's Word! (If you are able, continue this process for verses 49-88.)

v. 22 *I have kept your testimonies.*

Continue recording what David says he has done or has determined to do with regard to the law in verses 17-48

3. Record David's **feelings toward God and toward the law** in verses 17-48. (If you are able, continue this process for verses 49-88.) Additional writing space is available on the next page.

v. 20 *My soul is consumed with longing for your rules at all times.*

TAKE THE TRUTH TO HEART

Look to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of your faith (Heb. 12:2), and choose one Scripture from today that the Lord is using to *renew* your mind and *transform* your heart (Rom. 12:2).

How is God using this Scripture to teach, instruct, reprove, correct, encourage, or train you (2 Tm. 3:16-17)?

Meditate upon this Scripture today. Take God's Word to heart. Submit to it and humbly live it out. Remember God's love in the gospel, your death with Christ, and His life in you.

Take a moment to work on your weekly memory verse.



L o r d , I W i l l S e e k Y o u E a r n e s t l y !

D A Y F I V E

Opening Reflection: Immersing ourselves in God's Word reaffirms our settled trust in God's love and faithfulness which transforms our hearts, our minds, and our lives. David clearly understood this. He affirms it in Psalm 1:1-3: *"Blessed is the man [whose] . . . 2 delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. 3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers."* If we are to truly seek the Lord earnestly, we must be willing to make the investment. So make it your purpose! Seek God by faith in His grace, trusting in His ways and not man's, and reap a bountiful harvest! Read the passage from Psalm 119 below. Circle every occurrence of the words *law* and *word* and their synonyms.

Psalm 119:89-104

Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. 90 Your faithfulness endures to all generations; you have established the earth, and it stands fast. 91 By your appointment they stand this day, for all things are your servants. 92 If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction. 93 I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have given me life. 94 I am yours; save me, for I have sought your precepts. 95 The wicked lie in wait to destroy me, but I consider your testimonies. 96 I have seen a limit to all perfection, but your commandment is exceedingly broad. 97 Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day. 98 Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me. 99 I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation. 100 I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts. 101 I hold back my feet from every evil way, in order to keep your word. 102 I do not turn aside from your rules, for you have taught me. 103 How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! 104 Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.

Quietly meditate on these verses. Consider what David says about God and His Word. Where does David place His trust and in what does He delight? Go back and highlight each occurrence of David's *love* and *delight* in God's Word.

From this passage, what do you learn about the benefit and protection of choosing to place your delight in the law of God? Where do you find yourself placing your affections? Where do you place your trust?

How should you adjust your thinking based on this passage? Observing the psalmist's attitude towards God's Word and where he places his trust, how can you adjust your thinking? List a few practical and specific examples.

How might you grow to trust God's Word more?

How might trusting God's Word change your thoughts, feelings, and actions?



Just like yesterday, we are going to spend time in Psalm 119. Follow the instructions under the following headings while looking at 119:105-136. (Use an additional sheet of paper if necessary.) You will be amazed at the fruit that will come from your investment! God transforms our minds as we renew them by meditating on His Word.

Psalm 119:105-136 (137-176)

1. Record David's **petitions, requests, and pleas** in verses 105-136. (If you are able, continue this process for verses 137-176.)

1. Continued

2. Record what David says he **has done or has determined to do with regard to the law** in verses 105-136. (If you are able, continue this process for verses 137-176.)

3. Record David's **feelings toward God and toward the law** in verses 105-136. (If you are able, continue this process for verses 137-176.)



Write a letter to God today or tomorrow based on the verses from Psalm 119. Consider asking God to help you hear His voice, receive His lovingkindness, and know Him intimately as you earnestly seek after Him. Keep your letter to reference at the end of the study and see how the Lord answered you. May you truly enter into a love relationship with Him that you never dreamed could be possible.

TAKE THE TRUTH TO HEART

Look to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of your faith (Heb. 12:2), and choose one Scripture from today that the Lord is using to *renew* your mind and *transform* your heart (Rom. 12:2).

How is God using this Scripture to teach, instruct, reprove, correct, encourage, or train you (2 Tm. 3:16-17)?

Meditate upon this Scripture today. Take God's Word to heart. Submit to it and humbly live it out. Remember God's love in the gospel, your death with Christ, and His life in you.

Take a moment to work on your weekly memory verse.



Bring the Truth to Life

DAY SIX

Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. (Jas. 1:22)

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. (2 Pt. 3:18)

PERSONAL REFLECTION: Looking Back

In what areas has the Lord given you wisdom, grace, repentance, or encouragement this week?

Write a statement to share with your small group about how you did with your Take the Truth to Heart Step Three from last week.

STEP ONE: Take the Truth to Heart

Review the Take the Truth to Heart sections from each day. Look to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of your faith (Heb. 12:2), and choose one Scripture from the week that the Lord is using to *renew* your mind and *transform* your heart (Rom. 12:2).

How is God using this Scripture to teach, instruct, reprove, correct, encourage or train you (2 Tm. 3:16-17)?

STEP TWO: Put the Flesh to Death

What sin (wrong thinking or ungodly thought, belief, attitude, action, or inaction) are you convicted of due to the Scripture you chose. Confess this in writing, including an example of where you recognized this sin in your life this week.

Ask for the Lord's forgiveness and receive His mercy and grace (1 Jn. 1:9-10).

What do you now need to "put off"? From what old thinking, belief, attitude, or behavior do you need to repent in order to submit to God and apply His truth to your mind and heart (Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:5-9)?

STEP THREE: Bring the Truth to Life

Walking forward in repentance and faith, by God's grace, what will you "put on" (Eph. 4:23-24; Col. 3:10, 12, 14)? How are you going to do this? Be specific in your plan of action and find encouragement by what the Lord is going to do.

Meditate upon this Scripture today. Take God's Word to heart. Submit to it and humbly live it out. Remember God's love in the gospel, your death with Christ, and His life in you.

Take a moment to practice your weekly memory verse. Write it below.



Bring the Truth to Life Chart

This chart is to be filled out on class day.

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.

The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. (Jas. 5:16)

NAME	Step One TAKE THE TRUTH TO HEART SCRIPTURE	Step Two PUT THE FLESH TO DEATH SIN	Step Three BRING THE TRUTH TO LIFE ACTION

Helpful Information

We appreciate your interest in Thistlebend!

Please note that all our studies begin with a “Welcome” section providing an overview of how Thistlebend Discipleship Bible studies are structured. We invite you to view the “Welcome” section and additional sample lessons, which are also available to download.

If you have any questions or requests, please fill out the form on our website or email us at info@thistlebend.org.

We look forward to serving you,
The Thistlebend Team

