

# Sermon & Bible Study Helps

## PARENTING BY THE BOOK

Emphasis Passage: Psalm 119:98

### Parallel Translations

**King James:** Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me.

**New King James Version:** You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; For they are ever with me.

**New International Version:** Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me.

**New American Standard Bible:** Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, For they are ever mine.

**Revised Standard Version:** Thy commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me.

**New Living Translation:** Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for your commands are my constant guide.

**New Jerusalem Bible:** You make me wiser than my enemies by your commandment which is mine for ever.

### Hebrew Text

מִצְוֹתֶיךָ      תְּחַכְּמֵנִי      מֵאֹיְבֵי  
through Your commandments    you make me wiser    Than my enemies

כִּי לְעוֹלָם      הֵיאֵלֵי  
they are with me. forever    for

### KEY WORDS (WITH STRONG'S REFERENCE NUMBERS)

מֵאֹיְבֵי (m ē'ōy'bay) – noun, masc, sing, with *min* prefix and 1 common sing. pronominal suffix

(341) אֹיֵב (ōyēb) – enemy, foe, adversary

תְּחַכְּמֵנִי (t'chakkmēni') – Qal, imperfect, 2<sup>nd</sup> person, sing, with 1 common sing. pronominal suffix

(2449) חָכַם (chakam) – be wise, teach wisdom, make wiser

מִצְוֹתָיָהּ (*mitzōteka*) – noun, fem, plural, with 2<sup>nd</sup> person sing. pronominal suffix

(4687) מִצְוָה (*mitzvah*) – commandment, law, ordinance, precept

## CONTEXT

Psalm 119 is a magnificent tribute to the beauty and value of God’s word. The verses of this amazing psalm are arranged in alphabetical order according to the Hebrew alphabet, with each successive eight verses beginning with the same Hebrew letter. Verse 98 occurs in the group of verses that begin with the Hebrew letter “m”. In these verses, the psalmist credits God’s word for making him wiser than his enemies (v. 98) and his elders (vv. 99-100) and for its ability to help him know right from wrong (v. 104). He also expresses his deliberate choice to live in obedience to its teachings (vv. 101-102). In light of the Bible’s great benefits and beauty, the psalmist declares that he gets more pleasure from reciting God’s word than from eating honey (v. 103).

## SERMON AND BIBLE STUDY NOTES

### Introduction

There are many excellent books on parenting at the local Christian book store, and the best of them use the same primary text as their starting point—the Bible. Through the principles it teaches in its narratives and the direct instruction it gives in its propositions, the Bible helps parents fulfill their God-assigned task to raise up a God-loving generation. Psalm 119 is a beautiful expression of the many ways in which God’s word helps His people live faithful and fruitful lives. Verses 97-104 express three foundational truths about the Bible’s crucial role in helping us to be the parents God wants us to be and that we long to be.

### I. The Bible Is the Primary Guidebook for Parents, vv. 97-104.

The psalmist described the Bible from a number of perspectives. Various translations translate his Hebrew terms differently. According to the NASB, the psalmist called God’s word “law” (*tōrah*, v. 97), “commandments” (*mitzōt*, v. 98), “testimonies” (*ʿēdōt*, v. 99), “precepts” (*piqqudim*, vv. 100, 104), “word” (*dabar*, v. 101), “ordinances” (*mishpatim*, v. 102), and “words” (*ʿimrōt*, v. 103). It is probably no accident that the psalmist used seven different terms to refer to the Bible. He considered the Bible to be God’s complete and perfect communication to humanity.

While all the terms the psalmist used refer to the same subject and they can often be used interchangeably, each one also carries a nuance of meaning that helps to distinguish it from the others. As God’s “law” (*tōrah*, v. 97), the Bible teaches the reader how to live a life that pleases God. As God’s “commandments” (*mitzōt*, v. 98) the Bible gives clear guidance for making the right decisions in life. As God’s “testimonies” (*ʿēdōt*, v. 99), the Bible provides a witness to the life that God blesses or judges. As God’s “precepts” (*piqqudim*, vv. 100, 104) the Bible instructs people in the responsibilities they have for living right. As God’s “word” (*dabar*, v. 101), the Bible is God’s revelation of His will for right living. As God’s “ordinances” (*mishpatim*, v. 102), the Bible teaches the reader about proper relationships in life. As God’s “words” (*ʿimrōt*, v. 103), the Bible serves as God’s direct speech on the subject of right living.

Considered from all these perspectives, it is easy to see that the Bible is the primary

guidebook for parents. God's "law" teaches parents the values they need to instill in their children. God's "commandments" help parents know what boundaries to provide for their children. God's "testimonies" give parents models for the kinds of children God wants them to raise. God's "precepts" help parents raise responsible children. God's "word" reminds parents that God wants to help them raise their children. God's "ordinances" help parents teach their children how to treat other people. God's "words" provide God's counsel on the demanding task of parenting.

## **II. The Bible Equips Parents to Succeed, vv. 98-104.**

The Psalmist saw the Bible as the source of his success in all of life's endeavors. He said that it made him wiser than his enemies (v. 98). Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms*, p. 844, comments that the psalmist is not thinking so much about personal enemies as "those proud disdainers of godly men who make themselves obnoxious by their superior attitude." The Bible also gave him more insight than his teachers possessed (v. 99). Leupold, *Exposition*, p. 844, understands these teachers to be those who have studied ordinary human wisdom. He comments that "such wisdom cannot impart what is gained from the testimonies of God." Additionally, the Bible gave him more understanding than the elders had (v. 100). He is thinking here of those "who grow old in experience but not in the experience that the precepts of the Lord can impart," Leupold, *Exposition*, p. 844. Perhaps more important than all these is the role of the Bible in keeping the psalmist from error (vv. 101, 104). Sometimes a Christian can be his own worst enemy. A Christian submitted to learning God's instructions and living by them will avoid many personal mistakes.

Such benefits as these are certainly welcome news to parents. The Bible is the single-most important source to help parents become successful at the all-important responsibility of parenting. Parents face enemies of their children in their role as parents every day. There are even those who seek to undermine the very definition of the family. The Bible makes a person wise in these matters as it speaks clearly on God's family model, parental responsibilities, and children. On the other hand, there are those today who promote very different ideas about raising children. These self-proclaimed teachers often differ with the biblical model of parenting. The Bible helps parents sort through all of the proposed models and identify those that agree with God's guidebook. Additionally there are those who claim a special authority to teach others about parenting because they have been parents. The wisdom these would-be elders bring from their personal experience is extremely important, but The Bible should be parents' final source of wisdom. After all, it brings thousands of years of experience to parents and helps them benefit from the collected wisdom of some of God's greatest Spirit-led servants.

## **III. The Bible Is a Constant, Dependable Guide for Parents, v. 98.**

Books on parenting come and go. Every now and then someone comes up with a new way to approach parenting that departs from all the previous ways. Parents often find themselves discarding old, reportedly ineffective ways to be good parents and following the latest trends. The problem with this approach to parenting is that children are only children once. A failed parenting model may have permanent effects in a child's life that cannot be reversed simply because the parent discovers years later that his particular modern parenting style is not getting the job done.

The Bible on the other hand hasn't changed. The guidance it gave 2,000 years ago is the same guidance it gives today. The psalmist expressed his appreciation for the timelessness and the permanent relevance of the Bible for his own life by declaring to God that His commands "are ever with me." There is a great comfort in knowing that there is a source of permanent, unchanging counsel. The person who follows the Bible's guidance on parenting does not need to wonder if he will

ever regret doing so. As God's word, the Bible will never change, and God will never issue a revision or retract any of it. A parent can learn its teachings and use them all his life.

## **Conclusion**

While popular culture continues its downward slide, Christians do not have to feel as though they are fighting an unwinnable war as parents. God has provided many effective tools for Christians to raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. As God's word, the Bible provides direct, infallible guidance for parents. Whether it is by negative example, as in the case of Isaac and Rebecca's favoritism of Jacob and Esau (Genesis 26:28) or by positive example, as in the case of Hannah's love for Samuel (1 Samuel 1:19-28; 2:18-21), within its pages are the tools for every aspect of parenting. Christian parents can raise their children with confidence because they have a perfect guide in the person of the Holy Spirit who can help them understand and apply God's timeless biblical principles for raising children who will make their parents proud in the Lord.

## **WHAT CAN ONE PERSON DO?**

- Teach a class for young and prospective parents to help them understand the Bible's teaching about parenting.
- Ask your pastor to preach a series of messages on biblical parenting.
- Provide a counseling ministry to help parents who are struggling with rebellious children know how to help their children turn around.
- Write letters to the editor explaining your commitment to biblical parenting and why others should adopt biblical standards for parenting.
- Consider taking in wayward children in order to build godly principles into their lives and give them a chance to accept the Lord and live God-honoring, fruitful lives.
- Become a mentor for other parents and come alongside them to offer counsel and encouragement as they raise their young children..

## **HELPFUL SCRIPTURE**

Bible Passages that Give Guidance about Parenting

Genesis 18:19; Exodus 10:2; Exodus 12:26-27; Exodus 13:8, 14;

Deuteronomy 6:7, 20-24; Deuteronomy 11:18-21; Deuteronomy 32:46;

Psalms 78:5-6; Proverbs 3:12; Proverbs 13:22; Proverbs 19:18; Proverbs 22:6, 15;

Proverbs 23:13-14; Proverbs 29:15-17; Matthew 10:37; Luke 11:11-13; 2 Corinthians 12:14;

Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21; 1 Timothy 3:5, 12; 1 Timothy 5:8; Titus 2:4; Hebrews 12:7

# SUGGESTED BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS

This is a suggested Bible study for any size group. The sermon notes on this sheet, the accompanying fact sheet, and the enclosed materials serve as resources as you prepare to teach and then lead this Bible study. Answers are provided with the questions when appropriate, but do not be too quick to give the answers. Allow the participants time to talk about the questions among themselves and offer their own answers.

**Create Learning Readiness:** Share with the group some different parenting models you have seen or heard about, like permissive or strict disciplinarian.

**Say:** There are many parenting models for us to look at and choose as we try to decide how to do our best at being parents. While all of them have their strengths and weaknesses, the real question that we must answer is, what kind of parents does God want us to be? This lesson points us in the right direction to answer this question.

Call on a member to read Psalm 119:97-104.

Share with the group the context information in the Sermon and Bible Study Notes section of this guide.

**Say:** There are many excellent books on parenting at the local Christian bookstore, and the best of them use the same primary text as their starting point—the Bible. Through the principles it teaches in its narratives and the direct instruction it gives in its propositions the Bible helps parents fulfill their God-assigned task to raise up a God-loving generation. Psalm 119 is a beautiful expression of the many ways in which God’s word helps His people live faithful and fruitful lives. Verses 97-104 express three foundational truths about the Bible’s crucial role in helping us to be the parents God wants us to be and that we long to be.

**Ask:** How many words can you see in these verses that the psalmist used to refer to the Bible.

Write down the words as the members identify them. (Some translations do not reflect the presence of different words in the verses. Instead they translate two different Hebrew words with the same English word. They do this because the translators felt that both words meant the same thing. However, there are often slight nuances of difference between even very similar-meaning words. When an author takes the time to create such an extensive list of different words, the reader should first of all note all the different words and then decide for himself if any of them are true synonyms.) For a full list of the Hebrew words used by the psalmist in these verses refer the first point of the Sermon and Bible Study Notes section of this guide.

**Ask:** The psalmist used many different words to refer to the Bible. It is very likely that he wasn’t using them all as synonyms. What do you think about the Bible when you think about each of these words?

Write the members’ thoughts down next to the words. (Share the information about these words in the first point of the Sermon and Bible Study Notes section of this guide if the members cannot see the differences in meaning for themselves.)

**Ask:** When we consider all the things the Bible is and does, what effect should this have on our use of the Bible in parenting?

The Bible should be the primary guidebook for parents.

**Ask:** In what ways do the meanings of these words illuminate the role of the Bible in helping us to be good parents?

(If the members need some help with this, share the functions described in the first point of the Sermon and Bible Study Notes section of this guide.)

**Ask:** The psalmist said the Bible equipped him better than three groups of people. Who did he mention?

Enemies, teachers, elders.

**Ask:** Who might these various people represent in parenting terms?

(If necessary share the comments from the second point of the Sermon and Bible Study Notes section of this guide.)

**Ask:** The psalmist identified another enemy in verses 101-102 that the Bible helped him to deal with. Who is this enemy?

Himself.

**Ask:** How could we be our own enemy when it comes to parenting?

Let the members talk about this for a while.

**Ask:** How can the Bible equip parents better than all these other sources of help?

(If necessary share the comments from the second point of the Sermon and Bible Study Notes section of this guide.)

**Ask:** In verse 98 the psalmist said that God's commands "are ever with me." What did he mean by this?

He has committed God's word to memory. So no matter what his enemies may attempt to do to destroy him or lead him astray, God's commands come immediately to mind to keep him from error.

**Ask:** Once a person has God's word committed to memory, does he ever have to forget what he has learned because it is no longer true?

No.

**Ask:** How does this help us as parents?

(If necessary share the comments from the third point of the Sermon and Bible Study Notes section of this guide.)

**Ask:** How might we apply these principles about parenting to help us this week?

**Say:** Very good. Let's look for ways they help us this week and share the results with each other at our next meeting.