

Great Themes in Discipleship, #6

"Spiritual Transformation
Through the Word of God"
(Psalm 119)

--CEFC 3/13/22

Read Ps. 119:9-16

In the year 386,

a thirty-two-year-old man sat weeping in a garden

agonizing over the course of his life.

He had a brilliant mind, and had taught literature and rhetoric

in Carthage, Rome, and Milan.

He had been an adherent of one of the popular religious philosophies of his day,

but he felt himself to be a slave to his sexual passions,

taking one mistress and then another in an utterly promiscuous life.

In Milan, he had started attending a Christian church

and had come under the spell of the preaching of the bishop Ambrose.

He became increasingly convicted of his own moral depravity,

but he felt powerless to pull himself out of this miry pit.

"The tumult of my heart took me out into the garden,"

he later wrote in his *Confessions*,

"where no one could interfere with the burning struggle with myself

in which I was engaged . . .

I was twisting and turning in my chains. . .

Suddenly I heard a voice from the nearby house

chanting as if it might be a boy or a girl . . . saying and repeating over and over again,

'Tolle lege; tolle lege.—

Take up and read, take up and read.' ...

I interpreted it solely as a divine command to me to open the book

and read the first chapter I might find ...

So I hurried back to the place where ... I had put down the book of the apostle...

I seized it, opened it, and in silence read the first passage on which my eye lit:
'not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery,

not in dissension and jealousy.

Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ,

and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.'

I neither wished nor needed to read further.

At once, with the last words of this sentence,

it was as if a light of relief from all anxiety flooded into my heart.

All the shadows of doubt were dispelled."/

So it was that by reading Paul's words from Romans 13 (vv. 13f)

Aurelius Augustinus,

now known to the world as **St. Augustine** was converted,

and there is arguably no man

who has so shaped the thinking of the Western world as much as he.

Augustine was transformed by the Word of God. /

I could tell many similar stories—

of the experience of men like Martin Luther or John Wesley

or the theologian Karl Barth—
all were captured by the truth of the word of God,
Their lives changed the world.

Let me mention one more—this one more recent.

A young man sat in a jail cell full of anger and hate.

He was a radicalized terrorist—

he had been shot in a gunfight with Federal agents

while being arrested for planting a bomb in a mailbox.

In his solitary confinement he opened the Bible and turned to the Gospels

and read of a Savior whose love melted his hardened heart.

That man, Tom Tarrants, longtime Washington Director of the CSLI

has impacted a number of us in this room.

He was himself transformed by the Word of God.

These are just a few stories;

there are many others,

and not just of great Christian leaders

who spawned great spiritual movements,

but also of ordinary men and women, boys and girls,

whose lives have been impacted in no less profound ways

by the words found in this book.

There is power in these words.

For I am assured, and as we have affirmed,

these words are not merely the words of wise religious teachers--

these are also the very words of the eternal God--
words by which he speaks life into human souls,
and brings freedom and release to those
held captive to the forces of sin and death.

The Transforming Power of the Word of God—

that's the theme I want to address this morning,
and I think there is no more important lesson for a disciple of Jesus than this—
if you want to grow in your knowledge of God and your love for Christ
you must become a man or woman of the Word—

It is the Word of God

empowered by the Spirit of God

that brings the life of God into our lives.

As Paul writes in 2 Tim. 3:16,17--

"all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful

**for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,
so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."** /

We begin our journey as believers by encountering the Word of God--

Rom. 10:17--"Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ."

We respond to the Lord as we hear the Shepherd's voice

calling us by name through his Word.

Paul says this to the Christians of Thessalonica—

1Th. 2:13 --"we also thank God continually because,

when you received the word of God, which you heard from us,

you accepted it not as the words of men, but as it actually is, the word of God,

which is at work in you who believe." /

But encountering the Word of God is not just where we must begin;

it is also where we must remain

if we are to grow in our faith.

Let me direct you to Peter's words in 1 Peter 1— [*project this passage*--

v. 23—"For you have been born again, not of perishable seed,

but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

For, "All men are like grass,

and all their glory is like the flowers of the field;

the grass withers and the flowers fall,

but the word of the Lord stands forever."

And this is the word that was preached to you.

Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy,

envy, and slander of every kind.

Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk,

so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,

now that you have tasted that the Lord is good" (1 Pet. 1:23-2:3)

You have been born again through the living and enduring word of God—

now, Peter says, you are to grow up in your salvation—

how do we do that?

How do we grow into spiritual adulthood?

"Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk,

so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,"

Here, this milk that infants crave isn't contrasted with solid food

for those who are mature,

as in, e.g., 1 Cor. 3 and Heb. 5.

Peter's point is the way that infants desire that milk—

they must have it!

There's nothing half-hearted about a newborn baby's desire for milk--

It is the instinctive urge for life-giving nourishment.

Those of you who have had

those memorable middle-of-the-night experiences with a new-born

will know exactly what Peter is talking about.

That's the way we should be toward spiritual milk--

which in this context is that same living and enduring word of God

through which we were born again.

Our spiritual lives depend on it--

we cannot survive without it.

We must have the word if we are to grow up in our faith. //

Why should this be?

Is this a magic book?

When you read it,

does something mystical automatically transpire in your soul?

Do you suddenly become holy as your eyes move along the page?

No, I don't think so--and some new Christians are disappointed

when they aren't immediately changed.

What happens is this--

Growth in our Christian lives is always related to faith--

it is faith in who God is

and what he has done for us

and what he demands from us

and what he promises to us.

Faith is a trust, a confidence, that moves us to respond to God in loving obedience,

and that same faith allows us then to give ourselves to others in love.

Our faith grows as we come to know God better.

And how does that happen?

By attending to what he has revealed to us about himself in his Word.

God has spoken—

we are to listen to his word.

In that sense, the Bible is the means; it is not the end—

the end is knowing God,

but we know him as he reveals himself in his word.

As someone put it, "The word of the Lord constantly presents the Lord of the word."¹

The Bible gives life because it puts us in touch with the God who gives life.

¹Clowney, 1 Peter, p.79.

We must crave his word for we must crave him.

We are to crave God's word.

It should be a delight to us because God is a delight to us.

And to stir up that delight, I want to take you to the Bible itself./

Psalm 119 is one of the great passages of Scripture extolling the Word of God.

Only 3 or 4 of its 176 verses don't refer in some way to the Word of God,
the commands of God, the law, the commandments, the precepts of the Lord.

I'd like to spend a few minutes there this morning.

I've identified **six reasons from Psalm 119**

why we should delight in God's word—

as we understand better how the Word of God helps us grow.

1. As we look at Psalm 119,

the first source of delight is that the Word of God reveals eternal truth.

Psalm 119:160—"All your words are true;
all your righteous laws are eternal."

The whole notion of truth is up for grabs today.

There's "your truth" and "my truth"—

it all depends on where you stand

and how you happen to view things.

As a result, many people seem to be lost at sea, drifting on lifeboats without a paddle.

One observer of the late modern world puts it this way:

“There is no lighthouse keeper. There is no lighthouse.

There is no dry land.

There are only people living on rafts made from their own imaginations.

And there is the sea.”²

That's a despairing image, isn't it.

We need some fixed point by which to get our bearings in life,

some North Star by which to navigate.

We need a God's eye view of things—that's what truth really is—

and the psalmist says that is exactly what God has given us in his Word.

God's gives us a view of the world that stands outside of the world.

It's not a part of the flux of change that we experience every day.

God's word is eternal—

It provides a fixed point

by which to judge all other movement.

It is a lighthouse to guide us.

It stands over against this world

and speaks truth into it.

And because it is eternal, it is always relevant.

And not only is it relevant, it is also reliable—

v. 89—“Your word, O LORD, is eternal;

² John Dominic Crossan, cited in *Truth*, by Middleton and Walsh, p. 62.

it stands firm in the heavens.”

v. 138 —“The statutes you have laid down are righteous;

they are fully trustworthy.”

Have you ever seen a picture

of those beautiful multi-million dollar mansions in southern California

built on the palisades overlooking the Pacific Ocean.

They have a spectacular view of the ocean,

but unfortunately, when they have heavy rains,

these houses sometimes crumble as the sloping ground gives way.

There is no firm foundation.

They fall into the sea.

How many lives are just like that—

beautiful to look at, until the rains of life begin to fall.

Maybe it's a health problem, or a relational conflict, or a financial crisis.

Then the flimsy foundation on which they are built starts to give way,

and there is a big crash.

But the Word of God is eternal—it stands firm,

and that's what makes it reliable and worthy of our trust.

By living according to what God says

we can build our lives on a firm foundation that won't give way in the storms of life.

That's the very image that Jesus uses as he concludes his Sermon on the Mount—

and it was one that had a significant impact on my life as a teenager

considering the Christian message seriously for the first time.

What was true? What was reliable? What could I depend on?

What could be a rock on which to build my life?

v. 160—"All your words are true;
all your righteous laws are eternal."

God's word reveals eternal truth.

Next, the psalmist delights in God's word
because the word of God gives practical wisdom.

vv. 97-100—"Oh, how I love your law!
I meditate on it all day long.
Your commands make me wiser than my enemies,
for they are ever with me.
I have more insight than all my teachers,
for I meditate on your statutes.
I have more understanding than the elders,
for I obey your precepts."

There is a wisdom in the Bible that goes beyond
anything that can be attained simply by experience or education.
Living to be 85 doesn't make you wiser
if you keep repeating the same mistakes over and over.
Lots of Harvard Ph.D.s don't have a clue about how to live life.

But what wisdom is found in the word of God!

It is a wisdom from above,
a wisdom that speaks to the most significant dimensions of this life
and the life to come—
the wisdom about how to get along with people,
how to handle our money,
how to cope with the stresses of life.

But most importantly, the word of God gives us wisdom
about who God is and what his purposes are for our lives—
what it means for us to be human beings created in his image.
It gives us the divine design for human life.

And wisdom is not just about how to live
but also about what is worth living for.

v. 37--“Turn my eyes away from worthless things;
preserve my life according to your word.”

Where else can you get that?

v. 24—“Your statutes are my delight; they are my counselors.”

Who are your counselors?

Where do you go for wisdom about life?

Oh, what mistakes in life we can prevent if we just go to this book!

What hardships and hurdles we can avoid

if we just take God’s word to heart and put it into practice!

“Oh, how I love your law!

Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, . . .

I have more insight than all my teachers, . . .

I have more understanding than the elders, . . .”

This leads to one particular dimension of the wisdom that comes from God’s word
that merits special mention—
it is the wisdom of **moral purity**.

vv. 9-11 —“How can a young person stay on the path of purity?

By living according to your word.

I seek you with all my heart;

do not let me stray from your commands.

I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”

How does the word of God help to keep our lives pure?

Supremely by speaking the truth.

You see, all sin is rooted in a lie.

Didn’t the tempter say to Eve,

“Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’”

The devil deceives and confuses us,

and we look at the forbidden fruit, in whatever form it may take,

and it starts to look good for food

and pleasing to the eye,

and desirable for gaining wisdom.

We become short-sighted,

seeing only the immediate gain, for sin can be pleasurable for a moment,

and we ignore any long-term consequence.

We begin to listen to a voice inside that justifies our covetousness

or our envy or our greed or our lust—

“You deserve better,” we say to ourselves.

“Why should she get that big house?”

“You should have gotten that promotion.

The boss must have something against you.”

“Just one look—it won’t hurt anybody.”

There is nothing inside us strong enough to withstand this immoral onslaught.

We need a word from the outside—

a word from God, to speak truth into our situation,

cutting through the deception,

and reminding us what is good and right.

Isn’t that how Jesus himself used the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God,

when he did battle with Satan when he was tempted in the wilderness?

He responded to the devil’s taunts with the sure truth of Scripture.

It was hidden in his heart,

a concealed weapon, for which you do not need a license,

ready to be engaged at any time in self-defense.

•So, for example, when you feel snubbed, not getting the praise you think you deserve,

instead of getting in a huff,

you can recall the words of Scripture which say,

**“Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God
and he will exalt you at the proper time.”**

- When you are offended by something someone has said,
instead of responding in kind,
you can recall the words of Scripture, which say,
"Do not repay anyone evil for evil,"
but instead **“Bear with each other,
and forgive whatever grievance you may have toward one another.
Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”**

- When you are drawn to a magazine stand or an internet site that is sexually explicit,
instead of toying with the temptation,
you can recall the words of Scripture, which say,
**“Flee youthful lusts
and pursue righteousness.”**

- Or when you feel proud of your spiritual progress
and begin to look down on those poor sinners all around you,
you can recall the words of Scripture:
**"if you think you are standing firm,
be careful that you don't fall!" (1 Cor. 10:12).**

The Word of God hidden in our hearts has the power to speak truth
which helps us to combat the temptations that assail us every day.

What a great benefit that is!—

what a great protection that is!

“I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”

I move on—

Next, the psalmist delights in the word of God

because it results in real freedom.

“I will walk about in freedom,

for I have sought out your precepts.” (v. 45)

“I run in the path of your commands,

for you have set my heart free.” (v. 32)

Seeking out the precepts of God,

living in obedience to God’s commands—

this is true freedom, he says.

Our world thinks just the opposite.

The world’s freedom is the freedom from all constraints.

The world believes that freedom isn’t found in obedience to anybody.

It is the ability to choose whatever I want, whenever I want,

without you or anybody else saying anything about it.

Freedom and authority,

freedom and submission—these are incompatible concepts in the world's eyes.

But the real freedom spoken of in the word of God is different.

It's the freedom to be fully human as God created humans to be.

Just as the freedom of an eagle is to soar in the skies,
and the freedom of a whale is to swim in the seas,
so our freedom as human beings is to live in relationships of love
with our God and our neighbor.

Real human freedom is a freedom from the bondage of guilt,
it is a freedom from the constraints of self-centeredness.
It is a freedom to give of ourselves to others selflessly.

That kind of freedom doesn't come through a war of liberation
or a constitutional convention.
It comes through the powerful work of the word of God
transforming a sinful human heart.//

It does seem paradoxical, doesn't it—
this psalmist, who seems obsessed with obedience to a will not his own,
discovered in that obedience a freedom he could find nowhere else.

Jesus said it himself—

"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.

Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (Jn. 8: 31,32)

This is what the word of God offers us—real freedom.

No wonder the psalmist delights in it.

But even his delight with the word of God

doesn't mean that he always lives in a state of happiness.

Life in this fallen world is not that way—

there will be times of trial and hardship and pain.

But then, too, the word of God meets the need of his heart.

The psalmist prays in v. 28—

“My soul is weary with sorrow;

strengthen me according to your word.”

Lord, speak your word into my situation.

Let me hear something from you.

For example, the word of God speaks to us of **God's sovereign power—**

It affirms that nothing is impossible with him,

nothing takes him by surprise,

nothing can thwart his good purposes in our lives.

That word gives strength to face the bombardment that life throws at us.

The psalmist says in v. 52—

“I remember your ancient laws, O LORD,

and I find comfort in them.”

v. 76—**“May your unfailing love be my comfort,**

according to your promise to your servant.

and in v. 50—

“My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life.”

Or from Psa. 94:19—**"When anxiety was great within me,
your consolation brought joy to my soul."**

Sometimes we find ourselves in situations that look so hopeless

that all we have to hold on to is the promise of God—

Something happens, and we wonder,

How in the world could anything good come out of this?

But God's word tells us (Rom. 8:28),

**"In all things God works for the good of those who love him
and are called according to his purpose."**

Our future looks grim,

but God's word tells us in Jer. 29:11 that he knows the plans he has for us,

plans to give us a future and a hope.

The psalmist, looking back on his own time of hardship, testifies in v. 92—

v. 92--**"If your law had not been my delight,
I would have perished in my affliction."**

In fact, he discovered, as so many people have,

that it is in the midst of affliction

that our ears are often most attuned to hear God's voice.

And because hearing the voice of God is so valuable to him,

he can even say in v. 71,

v. 71--**"It was good for me to be afflicted
so that I might learn your decrees."**

Strength, comfort, hope—

that's what the word of God offers us in our time of trial.

We can find delight in the word of God

because it reveals eternal truth;

it gives practical wisdom;

it leads to moral purity;

it results in real freedom.

and it provides emotional encouragement;

No wonder the psalmist cherishes God's word as something precious.

But some might say that there is a danger here—

isn't the psalmist in danger of getting his focus all wrong—

isn't he in danger of bibliolatry—a worship of the Bible.

Can't you be so centered on the book that you forget its Author?

I suppose that's possible,

but that's certainly not true here.

For the psalmist's delight in the word of God

is a consequence of what that word expresses—

the very love of God himself.

All that the word of God does for us

is an expression of God's love.

God's word is an expression of his character--

v. 68—"You are good, and what you do is good;
teach me your decrees."
v. 41—"May your unfailing love come to me, O LORD,
your salvation according to your promise;"

This is what our words do, isn't it—
they reveal ourselves.

The psalmist is right to revel in the word of God—
Don't lovers say the same thing?

"Your words are sweet to me.
I cherish each one," we say.

[Illus—my letters from Susan when we were engaged—that were stolen!]

Think about it--Why do Valentine cards have words?

If they don't, we're expected to add them,
because words express our hearts,
they can communicate our love.

And in his word to us, God instructs us about his own character
and his design and his desire for our lives in this world.

More than that, he commits himself to us—
he makes promises to us that we can depend on.

All of this is an expression of his love.

He gives us truth to build our lives on;

he encourages our hearts;

he offers wisdom for living;

he leads us to moral purity;

resulting in real freedom—

he does all this because he loves us.

The psalmist loves God's Word because he loves the God who expresses himself
through that word.

He speaks often of seeking God's word

but in v. 58—"I have sought your face with all my heart"—it's the same thing.

It is part of the very nature of God that he wants to express himself in love,

and he expresses his love in words.

One day we won't need a book to mediate God's word to us.

One day he will address us face-to-face,

but not yet.///

But then, he has spoken face-to-face, hasn't he.

In the opening verse of the book of Hebrews we read,

"In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets

at many times and in various ways,

but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son."

In the beginning of the Gospel of John we read,

**“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God
and the Word was God.”**

And then we read,

**“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory,
the glory as of the One and Only, who came from the Father,
full of grace and truth” (Jn. 1:14).**

The Word of God has become embodied in a Person—

the Lord Jesus Christ,

who himself was a man of the Word of God—

he was soaked in Scripture—

it was on his lips,

and it guided his life.

For him, the words of Scripture had authority to settle any dispute—

as he asked his opponents, **“Have you not read . . . ?”**

He did not come to abolish the law and the prophets, but to fulfill them.

All the Scriptures testify about him (Jn. 5:39).

We delight in the Word of God

because we delight in Jesus Christ, who is the word incarnate.

He is at the center of the whole Bible.

Luther described the Bible as the crib that holds the Christ.

The Scriptures are the means by which receive that Word from God—

that word which alone brings grace and truth,
forgiveness and life.

Friends, have you encountered Jesus personally in your life?

I direct you to the word of the God—
read one of the Gospels—just read it and ask God to open your heart to
the wonderful person who is revealed there.

There is one one like him—full of grace and truth.
Go to the word of the Lord to come to know the Lord of the word.

John Stott writes this—"The Bible, then, has an essential place in the life of a Christian.

For the revelation of God leads to worship,
the warning of God to repentance,
the promises of God to faith,
the commands of God to obedience
and the truth of God to witness.

It is no exaggeration to say that without Scripture a Christian life is impossible."

*"How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!" —Ps. 119:103 //*

The Word of God

empowered by the Spirit of God
that brings the life of God into our lives.

There can be no mature Christian life
without a serious engagement with the Bible.

So let me urge you to avail yourselves of the many ways
we can engage the Word of God.

1) Obviously, you are engaging it right now through preaching—biblical preaching.

And this is the central task of any pastor—
to feed God's people from God's word.

Don't neglect the weekly exposure to the word in our worship.

There is something very powerful about
the Word of God proclaimed in the context of worship—
in the company of God's people.

God speaks!

So pray for your pastor—pray for his preparation and pray for his preaching.

And pray that you may be attentive to that word,
becoming hearers and doers.

2) We engage the Word of God through reading it—

I think of the reading of God's Word in worship—that's important;
but also personal reading—just read the Bible—every day—
it is nourishment for your souls.

Read it in big chunks, and read it in small morsels—but read it.

There is value in reading the Bible not just about the things you may learn
about particular topics—

the very act of reading Scripture,

in the conscious desire to be shaped and formed within the purposes of God—

it itself an act of faith, hope and love, an act of humility and patience—
It becomes a habit.

Read through the whole Bible

And over time it will shape your mind—
the reading of Scripture draws us into the real world—
the real world in which God is the central character.

It shows us that we live in a moral universe

with God as King and Judge,
a universe in which the highest reality is God's holy love
revealed in the cross of Christ.

It draws us into the great story he is writing in human history.

The story of Creation, Fall, Redemption and a glorious Consummation—
and we are to perform our part in that grand drama.

It's important to have a plan for reading the Bible—any plan will do—just do it.

3) We engage the Word of God through teaching and study—

avail yourself of good teaching in our SS classes and Bible studies.

4) We engage the Word of God through discussion—

read the Bible in fellowship with others—

The Holy Spirit works through the corporate body of Christ
to help us understand God's Word.

Discuss the Word of God with others in small group,

or even discuss the word of God with authors in books—

dialogue with them—

authors old and new

5) We engage the Word of God through meditation—

reflect on what you read—

chew on it; let its truth sink into your heart.

6) We engage the Word of God through memorization—

hiding God's word in your heart—

It becomes readily available to you—it becomes a source for meditation.

This requires discipline and accountability—

it's best done in partnership with others.

Find someone who will partner with you in that spiritually enriching practice.

7) We engage the Word of God through prayer—

God speaks to us; we respond in prayer.

Read the Bible and then ask, How should this lead me to pray—

in praise, or confession or supplication?

Speak back to God what you learn from his Word.

8) I might add that we can engage God's Work through singing as well—

God's Word joined to music is very powerful,

as it affects us emotionally

Let the Spirit of God use the Word of God to transform you

God's Word not only informs our minds,

it also changes our hearts.

1Th. 1:5 "our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power,
with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction." (also 1 Cor. 2:14)

D. L. Moody—"The Bible without the Holy Spirit
is a sundial by moonlight."³

By the Spirit's work

"the word of God is living and active.

Sharper than any double-edged sword,

it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow;

it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Heb. 4:12).

Word and Spirit can't be separated.

I like how pastor Warren Wiersbe puts it:

*When the child of God
Looks into the Word of God
And sees the Son of God,
He is changed by the Spirit of God
Into the image of God
For the glory of God.*

In conclusion I leave you with this:

³ Consider William Law: Without **the present illumination of the Holy Spirit**, the Word of God must remain a dead letter to every man, no matter how intelligent or well-educated he may be... ³

The translation team of the King James Bible (1611) wrote a preface to their work that not only addressed their patron, the King, but also the "gentle reader."

They urged these ordinary men and women

to read, search, study and love the sacred Scriptures—

I quote: "But now what piety without truth?

What truth (what saving truth) without the Word of God?

What Word of God (whereof we may be sure) without the Scriptures?

The Scriptures we are commanded to search.

They are commended [who] searched and studied them.

They are reproved [who] were unskilled in them, or slow to believe them.

They can make us wise unto salvation.

If we be ignorant, they will instruct us;

if out of the way, they will bring us home;

if out of order, they will reform us;

if in heaviness, comfort us;

if dull, *quicken* us;

if cold, *inflamm*e us.

Tolle, lege; tolle, lege, "Take up and read; take up and read. . . ."4//

Prayer—

Augustine later wrote this prayer regarding the Bible and its power—

Lord, "I know no other book so destructive of pride,

so potent a weapon to crush your enemies and all who are on their guard against you,
refusing to be reconciled with you and trying to justify the wrong that they do.

⁴ Cited in Timothy George, *Reading Scripture with the Reformers*, p. 255.

O Lord, I know no written words so pure as these,
none that have induced me so firmly to make my confession to you,
none that have so eased for me the task of bowing my neck to your yoke
or so gently persuaded me to worship you for your sake and not for mine.
Let me understand them, good Father.
Grant me this gift, for I submit myself to them . . ."

Song: #275 *How Firm a Foundation*

Benediction:

**For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us,
so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures
we might have hope—to the glory of God, who is blessed forever. Amen.**

Great Themes in Discipleship, #6

March 13, 2022

**"Spiritual Transformation
Through the Word of God"
(Psalm 119)**

Throughout history, the Word of God has had transforming power, and that is no less true today. This is a fundamental truth that we dare not neglect: The Word of God empowered by the Spirit of God brings the life of God into our lives.

I. A Biblical Mandate (1 Peter 1:23-2:3)—

**We are to crave God's Word
as a newborn baby craves milk.**

II. Why We Should Delight in God's Word (Ps. 119)—

- 1) The Word of God Reveals Eternal Truth
- 2) The Word of God Gives Practical Wisdom
- 3) The Word of God Leads Us to Moral Purity
- 4) The Word of God Results in Real Freedom
- 5) The Word of God
Provides Emotional Encouragement

6) The Word of God Expresses the Love of God

III. We Must Engage the Word of God—

with mind, heart, and will,

through the Holy Spirit

Tolle, lege; tolle, lege,

"Take up and read; take up and read. . . ."

Sermon Response:

**"Spiritual Transformation
Through the Word of God"
(Psalm 119)**

•How have you found the Word of God impacting your life in any of these areas:

- 1) The Word of God Reveals Eternal Truth
- 2) The Word of God Gives Practical Wisdom
- 3) The Word of God Leads Us to Moral Purity
- 4) The Word of God Results in Real Freedom
- 5) The Word of God
Provides Emotional Encouragement
- 6) The Word of God Expresses the Love of God

•Do you have a particular passage of Scripture that has a special meaning in your life? How has it impacted you?

•What plan do you have for reading the Bible regularly?

•Take some time to share Scripture with one another—just listen as it is read aloud. Then take some time to pray, reflecting on what you have heard.

