



Instructions for Life

Psalm 19:7-14



God's Revelation

- ❑ How can we gain knowledge, and know truth? Much can be discovered through science. But science is limited. For example, science may explain *how* nature works, but it cannot explain *why* it exists. Science cannot adequately address values, beauty, morality, meaning, or the supernatural. There are *realities* beyond the reach of science.¹
- ❑ If God is the ultimate reality beyond the material universe, he cannot be known *unless* he reveals himself. “Revelation” is necessary to know truth about God and his creation.
- ❑ “General revelation” refers to God’s revelation to all persons at all times and in all places. God reveals himself through nature, history, and human consciousness.
- ❑ “Special revelation” refers to God’s revelation to particular persons at definite times and places. God has revealed himself in various ways in human history, ultimately in the person of Jesus Christ. Scripture (the Bible) is recorded special revelation. It is “God’s word.”²
- ❑ Psalm 19:1-6 is concerned with “general revelation” (or “natural revelation”). See Lesson 1. Psalm 19:7-11 is concerned with “special revelation.”³

God's Instructions

- ❑ Read Psalm 19:7-14. The “law of the LORD” is a comprehensive term for God’s revealed will. It is God’s word.⁴ God’s word is perfect (complete), trustworthy, right, radiant (pure), sure, and altogether righteous (*vv.* 7-9).
 1. According to verses 7-11, what are the benefits of God’s instructions?⁵ Which benefits are especially attractive to you?

📖 “Your word is a lamp to my feet
And a light for my path” (*Psalms* 119:105).



2. Many human beings view law, commandments and rules as too restrictive. Many believe the greatest joy and satisfaction come from being entirely free to pursue their own desires and ambitions *without* restriction (especially “religious” restriction). However, God’s instructions “give joy to the heart” (*v.* 8). They are “more precious than gold” and “sweeter than honey” (*v.* 10). Why is this so?

¹ A person committed to philosophical materialism may deny this statement; however, such a commitment is not “scientific.” It is a philosophical presupposition, which cannot be proven to be superior to a supernatural worldview.

² This lesson does not try to prove the Bible is God’s word. See Jay or the ICF website for a defense of this claim.

³ Also see Romans 1:18-20, 2:14-16 for general revelation; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21 for Scripture as special revelation; and John 1:14, 18; Hebrews 1:1-2 for Jesus Christ as the ultimate special revelation.

⁴ Psalm 19 uses various terms for God’s word: “law” (*tôrâ*) – teaching; “statutes” or “testimony” (*‘ēdūt*) – truth attested by God himself, a warning sign; “precepts” (*piqqûidîm*) – orders, directions for guidance; “commands” (actually “commandment”); “ordinances” (*mišpātîm*) – rules. Some say “the fear of the LORD” is a synonym for the law, but it likely refers to the appropriate human attitude of humility, reverence, loyalty, and dependence on God.

⁵ They “revive the soul” – provide inner food for abundant life; make wise the inexperienced and naïve; “give joy to the heart;” enlighten the eyes; and provide warning; keeping the believer on the path of life and reward.

Human Response

- ❑ In the light of God’s revelation, David knows he is prone (inclined) to sin. Some sins are easily identified because they are “willful sins” (v. 13a). Other sins (“errors”)⁶ may not be clearly deliberate (willful, intentional) but indicate impurity in the heart (v. 12).
 - ❑ Because David understands the sin problem (which involves inner impurity), he knows he needs God’s grace and instruction. Only by God’s grace and instruction can David be “blameless” and “innocent of great transgression” (v. 13).
 - ❑ In his letter to the Romans, Paul makes it clear that a person cannot earn God’s approval by obeying the law.⁷ Though the law is holy, righteous and good, it is not able to make a person right with God, because sinful people are not able to obey the law (*Romans 7:7-13*).
3. If obeying the law cannot make us right with God, what is the primary function of God’s instructions, based on Psalm 19:7-11?⁸ What is the motivation for following them?
 4. How does this apply to the Christian life?⁹ How can we do better in learning, loving, and living God’s instructions for our lives?¹⁰ What practical steps can we take?



- ❑ David concludes with a praise offering to the LORD. Read verse 14. He desires alignment with God’s will both inwardly (“meditation of my heart”) and outwardly (“words of my mouth”). Each of us should desire this also!

Reflection/Application

- In your life, what is the basis of meaning, purpose, morality, and guidance in life? Are you satisfied? If there is a personal God who made you (and there is!), He is the basis for these things. Seek to know this God, and listen carefully to His operating instructions.
- As a Christian, does God’s word “give joy to your heart?” Do you *delight* in learning and applying God’s instructions to your life? If not, pray that God would change your heart. Over the next 11 days, read Psalm 119 (16 verses each day). As you read, identify at least one thing for which you are thankful, and meditate on it (think about it) throughout the day.

⁶ “error” (*šegi’ot*) – comes from verbal root (*šgg*) which carries the meaning “to commit error or sin inadvertently.” “Hidden sin” (v. 12b) may refer to “secret sin” (that is, willful sin done in secret) or a sin that is “hidden not because it is too small to see, but because it is too characteristic to register” [Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1-72* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973), 100].

⁷ In Romans, the word “law” typically refers to the Old Testament law (or “law of Moses”). However, the principle applies to good works in general. Paul writes elsewhere, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9, NIV).

⁸ In Paul’s writings, the primary function of “the law (of Moses)” was to help people realize their desperate need of God’s grace. The emphasis of Psalm 19 is different. “Torah (God’s law) marks out the boundaries of holy living in the presence of a holy God. Torah is not a way to gain God’s gracious presence but is a response to the reality of the holy God dwelling *already* in the midst of his people” [Gerald Wilson, *The NIV Application Commentary: Psalms – Volume 1* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 378.]

⁹ Though we are saved by God’s grace through faith, faith without good actions is dead (James 2:14-19). In other words, genuine faith is evidenced by our attitudes and actions. Christians are called to live a holy life. God’s instructions (in the Bible) guide us. Thus Christians should value God’s word no less than David does in Psalm 19.

¹⁰ In general, this involves commitment to Bible reading and study in order to know God’s instructions. We need much prayer, fellowship (where we can grow and be encouraged), and a sincere desire to submit our lives to God’s will (Romans 12:1-2). We will love God’s instructions if we love God. So we need to cultivate a heart for God.