



A LIGHT TO MY PATH
PRONE TO WANDER
PSALM 119:9-16

MAIN IDEA

Christians should recognize their tendency to wander and commit to using God's Word as a guard against falling into sin.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

In a world full of security gates and alarm systems, we have learned how to guard the things that are important to us. However, most people stop short of protecting ourselves in the spiritual realm. Today we are continuing in Psalm 119 and discussing how we can better guard and protect ourselves from wandering away from God and falling into sin.

- **What evidence have you seen or experienced that reinforces the claim that we are all prone to wander?**
- **Why is it important to protect your material things? Why is it even more important to protect yourself spiritually?**

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> Have someone in your group read
Psalm 119:9.

This is the big question to start things off. How can any of us live a pure life and not be caught up or trapped in our sin? Is that even something you desire? If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, then this should be your goal.

- **Why is this question an important one for you to consider?**

- **What is the key to protecting yourself spiritually?**

You guard what is important to you or what you consider valuable. If you are taking your walk with the Lord seriously, then learning how to guard it according to God's Word is key.

- **What do you think it means to guard your life according to God's Word?**

It's the wise thing to do and it's possible. Psalm 119 continues with practical, specific ways that you can set a guard on your life to protect you from wandering into sin.

> Have someone in your group read
Psalm 119:10-11.

- **What do you think it means to seek God with your whole heart?**
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- **What would be some things that might distract or take away from you seeking after God whole heartedly?**

The concept of seeking after God with your whole heart speaks to our priorities. The Psalmist stressed that seeking after God will help keep a believer from the natural tendency to wander.

- **Why would you say it is a natural tendency for all of us to wander away from the Lord?**

Scripture is full of stories and evidence that wandering is an issue for the people of God. It comes down to where your focus is and what you chase after. If you get caught up in chasing what the world tells you will bring satisfaction, then you will wander from the Lord. You go where you look.

- **How have you seen this to be true in your life?**
- **How does focusing on the commandments of God help guard against wandering? How can you focus on His Word more?**

Verse 11 takes making the Word of God your focus to the next level. Hiding or storing Scripture in your heart is a powerful protection from sin that occurs when we wander. When you store God's Word in your heart and mind it is always available to guide you and to protect you.

- **How has memorizing Scripture protected you from sin or wandering?**
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- > Have someone in your group read
Psalm 119:12-16.

Notice how the psalmist responded with praise to the Lord while talking about Scripture. It is as if in writing about how he was protected by God's Word that he needed to pause and simply be grateful to God for that. In his praise, he also petitioned the Lord for help and asked to be taught even more. That is an excellent example for us to follow as we seek to guard our lives against sin through Scripture.

- **Why is it a good idea for us to ask God for help in knowing His Word?**

The last few verses for today's study get personal. The psalmist listed what his response was and what it would be. These are all things we can put into practice in our lives if we want to experience change and the benefits that come with protecting ourselves spiritually.

- **Look back through verses 12-16 and call out the different things the Psalmist listed that what he was doing or would do.**

- **Which of these stands out to you as something you should commit to doing? Why?**

In saying that he had declared with his lips all God's rules, the psalmist showed respect for the Word of God. He also wrote of his delight in the testimonies of God. When you love something and are passionate about it, you will talk about it. Think about how much you share about the people you love and take delight in whether kids, grandkids, pets, friends, coworkers, or whoever. The same should be true about our Savior.

- **How often do you talk about Scripture in your daily life? Do you find ways to bring up God's Word that you know to be true and applicable to daily situations? Why or why not?**

- **What would it take for you to "delight" in the Lord more?**

When you choose to meditate on God's Word and take delight in it as you fix your eyes on the Lord's ways, it is less likely you will forget it. That's when it all comes together, and we develop the habits and disciplines that will keep our way pure and avoid the tendency to wander.

- **How do you see delighting, meditating, and fixing your eyes on Scripture as working together to keep your life on track with the Lord and prevent wandering?**

- **Which of these three verbs (meditating, delighting, fixing) do you want to be more focused on going forward?**

APPLICATION

- **Choose one of the verbs from Psalm 119:9-16. Write out how you will be proactive about putting it into practice in your life this week.**
- **Who do you know that is seeking the Lord right now? Take a portion of Psalm 119:9-16 to pray over their pursuit of the Lord each day this week.**
- **What are some of the best ways to memorize Scripture and store it up in your heart? How can we plan to hold each other accountable on this commitment?**

PRAY

Praise the Lord for His wisdom in knowing what you need even before you experience an issue. Express gratitude that His Word is such a powerful guard against your own tendency to wander. Commit to making the necessary changes you need to in order to live with more respect for Scripture and follow the example of the psalmist in asking for God to teach you His statutes and Word. Ask God to use His Word in your heart to convict you *before* you choose to sin.

PSALM 119:9-16

119:9. Verse 9 asks and answers a crucial question. The first line asks how a young man can keep his way pure, hinting at the temptation of the youth to accept the invitation of folly in Prov 9:13–18. The young man (*na'ar*) refers to one up to the time of marriage or more generally to a student addressed as “my son” in Proverbs. The second line answers that the key to maintaining a pure way of life is to keep it according to God’s word. Left to his own way, the youth would gravitate toward impurity and folly.

Notes:

119:10. The psalmist claims that though he was prone to wander from the Lord’s commands (cf. v. 176), he is one of the happy people who seek the Lord with all their heart (cf. v. 2). The overall trajectory of his life is commitment to the Lord, but he realizes that even the most godly person has the capacity for defecting into sin (cf. the warning in Prov 19:27).

119:11. Because of his wholehearted search for the Lord (v. 10), the psalmist has treasured God’s word in his heart. The verb *spn* (“treasured”) has the technical sense of memorizing God’s commandments so that they are deeply kept in the heart (cf. Prov 2:1; 7:1; 10:14) and thus prompt one to live in devotion to the Lord. Because the word of God has penetrated to his *lēb* (“heart”), the core of his life that includes his thinking, his feelings, and his choices (cf. v. 2), it keeps him from missing the mark of God’s holy standard expressed in his word.

119:12. As in v. 7, the psalmist again takes the stance of a learner as he calls on the Lord to teach him. Because the Lord is his teacher, what he says must be heard, accepted, and obeyed. By addressing the Lord as “blessed” (*bārûk*), he may be setting what he is learning in the context of worship (cf. the similar language in 1 Chr 29:10).

119:13. What the psalmist has learned from the Lord (v. 12) he proclaims publicly because he views himself as the channel of God's instruction to others. Because the verb *spr* ("proclaim") is used frequently in the psalms for a verbal act of worship, that may well be the context in which his communication of God's word takes place, as in Ps 22:25.

Notes:

119:14. The way of the Lord as revealed in his word is what the psalmist truly values as much as all riches, and in v. 127 he extends this to say that he loves God's commands more than even the purest gold. Because he values God's way so highly, in his way the psalmist derives great joy. It is not his duty but his delight to follow the way of the Lord.

119:15. As in Ps 1:2, his delight in the word of the Lord produces meditation on the word. The biblical sense of meditation involves focused attention leading to active obedience, as one considers carefully how the way of the Lord can become his own way of life. The whole-life response to the word of God engendered by the process of meditation is why in Psalm 119 the instruction of God is accepted joyfully by the psalmist.

119:16. Continuing in the joyful spirit of v. 15, the psalmist determines not to forget God's word because he values it. He will need to be intentional about remembering what the Lord has said because to forget God's word would be to forego his joy in it. The book of Deuteronomy in particular warns against ingratitude that forgets what the Lord has said and done because that can so easily lead to disobedience to his commands (cf. Deut 4:23; 8:11; Judg 3:7; Ps 78:7, 11).