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God Speaks Through the Bible

IN FOCUS: *God's Word is His primary means of speaking to us.*

SCRIPTURE: *Psalms 19:7-14*



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

LOOK AT OUR WORLD

The internet is full of sites claiming to guide us and show us what to do. Pick a subject, and someone is ready to give you direction on the matter. This is nothing new. Solomon said, "there is no end to the making of many books" (Eccl. 12:12). The ultimate guidance we need comes from God, and the primary way He has revealed His will is through His Word.

When have you thrown in the trash the instructions of a newly acquired product, only to dig them out later when you ran into a problem?

- ▶ We sometimes assume that common sense and perseverance are the only tools we need to handle the challenges life throws at us.
- ▶ To answer the big questions of life rightly, we need a reliable source of truth. God's Word is that reliable source and it's the main way God speaks to us.

BONUS: *When has a passage of the Bible made a lasting difference in your life?*
(PSG, p. 12)

For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at biblestudiesforlife.com/adults.

1. PSALM 19:7-9

God speaks to reveal His character and nature.

Invite a volunteer to read aloud Psalm 19:7-9. Then, use the Key Words to explain the descriptions of God's Word.

KEY WORDS

- A Instruction (CSB); law (KJV) (v. 7)**—The Hebrew word *torah* means “law” and refers to God’s instructions, especially the first five books of the Bible. When Jesus mentioned “the Law and the Prophets,” He was referring to those books along with the prophetic writings that followed.
- B Perfect (v. 7)**—To be both complete and flawless. The term is used to describe God and His work (Deut. 3:24), animals offered to God (Ex. 12:5), and a person who walks uprightly in his or her relationship with God (Gen. 6:9; Deut. 18:13).
- C Testimony (v. 7)**—God-given commands and covenant promises; God wrote the Ten Commandments on stone tablets, later referred to as “two tables of testimony” (Ex. 31:18; 40:3; Num. 1:50).
- D Precepts (CSB); statutes (KJV) (v. 8)**—God’s covenantal instructions and commandments.
- E Command (CSB); commandment (KJV) (v. 8)**—Instructions, either human (Prov. 7:1-2) or divine; for the Hebrews, it meant all the commands God gave through Moses (Ex. 24:12; Deut. 30:8).
- F Radiant (CSB); pure (KJV) (v. 8)**—Refers to something that is clear and enlightening. Using this Hebrew term, God calls each of His followers to have a pure heart (Ps. 24:4; 73:1).
- G Fear (v. 9)**—A holy reverence for God and His name.
- H Ordinances (CSB); judgments (KJV) (v. 9)**—Refers to God’s legal decisions or rulings, including judgments about right and wrong, guilt or innocence.

What’s the difference between God’s character and His nature?

- ▶ *Character* refers to how God consistently acts—He is loving, just, merciful, faithful.
- ▶ *Nature* refers to who God is—His unchanging essence, such as being holy, eternal, and all-powerful.

How do verses 7-9 reveal God’s character and nature?

- ▶ Verse 7 begins with “perfect,” which reflects God’s character. His instruction is perfect because He is perfect.

- ▶ Verses 7-9 list attributes that flow from God’s character: “trustworthy/sure,” “right,” “radiant/pure,” “reliable,” and “righteous.”
- ▶ God’s nature is revealed in the intended results for giving us His Word: (1) He wants to see our lives renewed. (2) He wants us to gain wisdom, experience joy, see the world clearly, and trust His guidance.

How does it benefit believers to affirm the perfection and reliability of God’s Word? When has the reliability of God’s Word been proven to you?

BONUS: What are some things you’ve learned about God from Scripture? When has a verse from the Bible brought wisdom or opened your eyes about a matter? (PSG, p. 14)

DIG DEEPER: Use the information on Psalm 19 on page 8 to discuss how the psalmist’s view of God’s law differed from ancient cultural attitudes.

2. PSALM 19:10-11

God speaks to encourage us and warn us.

Direct a volunteer to read aloud Psalm 19:10-11. Use the Key Words to prompt reflection on how Scripture shapes our desires and warns us for our good.

KEY WORDS

- I Servant (v. 11)**—A person committed to the will of someone else, either by appointment (Ex. 5:16), office (Ex. 10:7), or choice.
- J Reward (v. 11)**—The peace and satisfaction that come from living the way God designed us to live.

What makes God’s instructions for life superior to any and all other instructions? How do the images of gold and honey in verse 10 deepen our understanding of the value and experience of engaging with God’s Word?

- ▶ Gold is valuable and lasting, while honey is sweet and nourishing. Verse 10 shows the value and superiority of God’s Word.
- ▶ “Desirable” implies the psalmist knows from experience the value of hearing and obeying God’s instructions. He is encouraged by them because he knows they are in his best interest.

BONUS IDEA: Use the Bonus Idea on page 8 to facilitate a group activity on exploring the blessings of God’s Word.

Why do some people welcome warnings but others reject them?

- ▶ Verse 11 shows the additional value of being “warned” by God’s instructions.
- ▶ True followers of Jesus will come to see the boundaries God sets for Christian living not as restrictions, but as loving guidance meant to protect and bless.

When have you felt drawn to follow God’s Word, even when it challenged your comfort or preferences? What helped you make that choice?

BONUS: When have you seen Scripture keep someone from making a big mistake? How have you been rewarded by keeping God’s Word front and center? (PSG, p. 16)

3. PSALM 19:12-14

God speaks to convict us and guide us in right living.

Invite someone to read aloud Psalm 19:12-14. Then, use the Key Words to lead a conversation about the role of confession, protection from sin, and the desire for our words and thoughts to honor God.

KEY WORDS

- K Unintentional sins (CSB); errors (KJV) (v. 12)**—The sins we commit unknowingly or even naively.
- L Cleanse (v. 12)**—To make something clean or pure, often with the idea of being made blameless and free from guilt, especially in a spiritual or moral sense.
- M Blameless (CSB); innocent (KJV) (v. 13)**—The idea of being completed or finished; also reflects being in the state that God planned or intended. It was used to describe completed tasks during the construction of the Jerusalem temple (1 Kings 6:22; 7:22).
- N Willful sins (CSB); presumptuous sins (KJV) (v. 13)**—Defiant, careless sins we commit despite having full knowledge of their wrongness.
- O Redeemer (v. 14)**—A close relative or next of kin who buys back property for the benefit of another (see Ruth 2:20).

What is the best way for a believer to identify sin in his or her life?

- ▶ Generally, unintentional sin is the result of not knowing what God’s Word says. Our only hope for perceiving

unintentional sin is by growing in our knowledge of His Word. Only then can we ask for cleansing.

- ▶ The psalmist’s request for willful sin not to “rule me” (CSB) or “have dominion over me” (KJV) is his admission that willful sin will happen in the future, but he doesn’t want them to govern his life. “Blameless” in this application isn’t sinless perfection but a heart that is committed to right living according to God’s instructions.

How do verses 12-14 show that God does not demand perfection from His followers? What does God demand from His followers?

- ▶ David was willing to acknowledge his own faults and limitations. God desires that His followers will have humble dependence on Him as our “redeemer” (v. 14).
- ▶ David’s prayer models sincerity and a wholehearted desire to honor God in both words and actions.

What methods has God used in the past to bring about conviction of sin in your life? When has a verse or verses effectively guided you toward right living?

BONUS: How have you seen sin rule over a person? How has God been your Rock and your Redeemer? (PSG, p. 19)

LIVE IT OUT

If you’re not hearing God speak to you through His Word on a regular basis, here are some things you can do.

- ▶ **Reflect.** Review verses 7-9 and commit yourself to trust in God’s words and instructions. Refer to 2 Timothy 3:16-17 for added support.
- ▶ **Engage.** Begin using a reading plan for the Bible. If you are already doing this, start using a journal to record what God has said to you through His word.
- ▶ **Connect.** Enlist a mature believer to be an accountability partner for you. Share your personal struggles with sin and give them permission to hold you accountable.

PRAY & REMEMBER

Lord, thank You for Your Word. Guide me to trust in its reliability and goodness. Let it be a guide that keeps me from sin and motivates me to serve You. As Psalm 19:14 says, “May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you.”

BONUS IDEAS

This Optional Activity can be used in conjunction with Psalm 19:10-11: God speaks to encourage us and warn us.

This activity demonstrates that God's Word is the primary way God communicates with us, and it speaks to a variety of situations and challenges in the Christian life. Sometimes God speaks to encourage us and sometimes He speaks to warn us.

Materials Needed:

- No supplies are needed for this optional activity, but each person in the group will need access to a Bible.

DIVIDE the group into two teams. Assign Matthew 6 to one team and Matthew 7 to the other. Give the teams time to find an encouragement and a warning in their assigned chapter. Instruct them to be prepared to share the encouragement they selected and the benefit that results from obeying it and the warning they selected and the consequences of ignoring it. When both groups are ready, let them share their findings.

CONCLUDE the activity by emphasizing the guidance each encouragement and warning gave. Help the group to apply this activity to their lives by discussing the importance of obedience to God's Word. Say: *It's a blessing to have God's Word because we can know precisely what God wants and how we can live a life that pleases Him. But let's remember that it's not enough simply to know God's Word; we must also obey it.*

DIG DEEPER

The first and second halves of Psalm 19 may seem to be unrelated. The first half (vv. 1-6) talks about the glory of God being revealed in the heavens, as the sun goes from one end of the sky to the other. The second (vv. 7-14) refers to the soundness of God's instructions and decrees and the benefits of honoring and obeying His law and commands.

Ancient cultures, though, saw a connection between their gods and their laws. Archaeology gives evidence of this. We see this, for instance, in the famous Code of Hammurabi, which was inscribed on a black basalt stone that stands about seven feet tall. Archaeologists discovered this near the ancient Persian city of Susa (biblical Shushan); it dates to 1750 BC. The Code of Hammurabi is divided into three parts: the prologue, the laws (282 laws listed), and the epilogue.

The image, which is at the top—above the Code—portrays the god Shamash seated on his altar and Hammurabi, the king of Babylon, standing before him and receiving the symbols of justice and order. Shamash was the Mesopotamian sun god. The ancients believed he was also the god of justice. The carving thus depicted Hammurabi receiving his laws

directly and personally from Shamash. This affirmed that Hammurabi's laws were not his own but were from a divine origin. The Mesopotamians were not the only ones who connected their laws with their god.

Ra (also spelled Re), the sun god, was the most popular deity of ancient Egypt. The Egyptians believed he was the king of their gods and that he daily moved across the sky in a sailing ship. Ra's daughter was Ma'at; Egyptians considered her to be the embodiment of truth and justice. Thus, the Egyptians believed their laws and justice were rooted in and ultimately derived from their sun-god, Ra. Upon assuming the throne, an ancient Egyptian king would declare himself to be "The Son of Ra who lives by Ma'at"—meaning lives by justice and truth.

The psalmist, though, did not declare himself to be divine or the originator of divine laws. Instead, he clearly stated throughout the psalm that Yahweh is the Author and Originator. Thus, we read about the instruction, testimony, command, and ordinances of the Lord. He is the Author and the only One who is divine.



The Code of Hammurabi inscribed on a basalt slab on display at the Louvre