



**Saint John United Methodist Church**  
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**Message for January 10, 2021**  
**“Old Habits, New Habits: Bible Study”**  
**Speaker: Pastor Tom Grieb**  
**Scripture: Psalm 119:14-16, 105**

## **The Same Old Same Old**

There’s that Bill Murray again, stuck in his perpetual Ground Hog’s Day.

How about your own Ground Hog’s Day? How are you doing in breaking out of the same old same old and developing brand new habits that will make for a brand new you.

Our faith, if anything, is a faith of a brand-new life. Our sign said it best this week, borrowing from what Paul writes in II Corinthians 5:17, *“If anyone is in Christ, the old has gone, the new had come!”*

## **A Word about Psalm 119**

Regarding our scripture for today we could have read 176 verses, but alas we resist. That’s not to say you can’t or shouldn’t read all 176 later on today.

Psalm 119 is a devotion to the word of God. It shares the writer’s passion for God’s word, a passion you and I ought to have. Psalm 119 is an alphabetic acrostic, using each of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. One letter begins each of the sections of this great Psalm.

Unlike the other Psalms, which were intended to be sung, Psalm 119 was meant to be read. So today, instead of 176 verses we read only four, four that offer the gist of the high regard and passion the Psalmist has for God’s word.

Let’s read then, Psalm 119:14-16, 105.

### ***Psalm 119:14-16, 105***

*I rejoice in following your statutes  
as one rejoices in great riches.  
I meditate on your precepts  
and consider your ways.  
I delight in your decrees;  
I will not neglect your word.  
Your word is a lamp for my feet,  
a light on my path.*

## **Thankful for This Book**

This is the Bible I study from most regularly. I have had this Bible for years.

I got it when I was here before. It has been a constant companion since. Bob and Robbie Battoe had a restoration business at the time. They claimed this Bible from a house that had burned and gave it to me. It was in perfect shape when they gave it to me. As you can tell it is not in great of shape now. I have taped it together I don't know how many times.

I even tried a new Bible a few years back, but I had so many notes, highlights, and underlines in this Bible I couldn't get away from it. God has spoken to me so many times and in so many ways through this book, and I am eternally thankful.

### **Constant Companion and Guide for Life**

Just recently, we spent quite a bit of time during Confirmation Class talking about the Bible and how important it is to read and study. We even went through where everything is. We had the kids mark where the division between the Old and New Testaments was. We then closed our Bibles and opened them near the center, only to find the Psalms.

We then closed them again and opened our Bibles to the Book of the Law—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. We closed them again and opened them to the Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. You get the idea.

We wanted the kids to become familiar with where things are in the Bible. All of us would do well to do the same. If our Bibles remain closed, we will be more threatened by them, than sustained. A familiarity with the richness and diversity of scripture, not to mention where things are found, will go a long way toward the Bible being our constant companion and guide for life.

### **The Holy Habit of Bible Study**

And so, we find ourselves here in the new year considering those habits we need to be developing. As we enter the new year, we are talking about those things that if regularly practiced will help us face whatever comes our way.

As you remember from last week, we talked about *“holy habits”* that allow God to claim more and more of our interior lives to the end that we become wholly and completely his. Bible Study is one of those *“holy habits.”*

### **A Guide for Our Next Steps**

We read it just a few minutes ago. *“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.”*  
Psalm 119:105

Nothing offers guidance and direction like scripture. The Holy Spirit has a way of speaking through scripture to the place where it lights our way and provides guidance for our next steps.

My wife, Cheryl, takes off early every morning to run and it is dark as pitch. She carries with her a flashlight. The light from that flashlight guides her every step.

The image of Psalm 119:105 is that of a light affixed to a person's foot while walking at night, a light that helped guide the way.

God's word provides that sort of guidance, particularly in a darkened world.

## **An Anchor Amid the Chaos**

Man, this has been a chaotic week. In fact, you could say that about the last nine months. The image of protesters storming the capital building and making their way inside to the halls of Congress is the epitome of chaos. In so many ways, it seems we have simply lost our sense of direction, and, if not direction, then a sense of mooring.

If anything, the Bible offers that direction and provides a sense of mooring in a chaotic world. It has a way of providing an anchor when things seem so adrift.

There was a time for the Kingdom of Judah when things were adrift as well. The nation had gotten away from scripture. During a renovation of the temple in Jerusalem, a copy of the law was found. It was read in King Josiah's presence. He was so distraught that he rent his clothes. He realized how far afield his nation had become. Josiah not only heard the law but began to implement it. Great reforms took place because the people were once again acquainted with scripture.

We will have to admit that the Bible does not seem to be informing the general flow of culture these days and that's regrettable.

That is all the more reason to return to scripture.

- The Bible has a way of bringing a sense of order to things. The Bible reminds us that at creation God brought order to chaos and called it good.
- The Bible has a way of lending strength, regardless of how chaotic things might be. Throughout scripture we are reminded that God's got this.
- The Bible has a way of offering perspective. In reading the Bible, we get a sense of God's perspective on things. We see things as God sees them, which is always where we need to be.
- The Bible has a way of clarifying who we are. We are frail and fallible. We mess things up all the time. It is just who we are. We are human, after all.
- The Bible though is just as clear about God's provision to remedy that and his name is Jesus.
- The Bible is also clear about things of justice and righteousness. The Bible calls us to ministry with the least, last, and lost.

## **God Still Wants to Speak with Us**

God still wants to speak with us, and scripture provides a way for him to do that.

There are more Bibles published than any other book, and yet the vast majority of those Bibles sit on our bookshelves, coffee tables, and nightstands without ever being opened. The call for today is to take those Bibles and read them, and not just read them, but read them like nothing else we read.

We need to approach scripture with reverence, which means approaching scripture with an ear to hear what God wants to say. And as we read, we need to be prepared for the fact that what God says may not be what you want to hear. Scripture can be challenging like that.

The thing about the Bible is that you can read a passage one day and certain words or phrases just seem to leap off the page. You can read the same passage another day and different words or phrases will leap off the page. That's simply the way God works through his word. God speaks into our lives through scripture offering us just what we need for that day.

The Apostle Paul writes in II Timothy 3:16, *"All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the person of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."*

Hebrews 4:12 puts it this way, *"For 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."*

There is not a day then that should go by that we don't seek God through his word. And as we seek God through his word, we need to be asking, *"What is God saying to me?"* and *"What am I going to do about it?"*

*James 1:22 says, "Don't merely listen to the word, but do what it says."*

I am convinced that as you seek God through his word you will develop a passion for scripture, just like the Psalmist who said, *"I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word."* Psalm 119:14-16

I am also convinced that as you seek God through his word you will begin to grow. You will not only confront the word of God in all its delights and challenges, but will encounter the God of that word, and he will transform you to no end.

You see, when it comes to Bible study, it is not just information that's important, but transformation that comes from encountering the living God.

God wants to do good things in you through his word. So, get to it when it comes to the studying God's word.