

Your Words
Print or Digital?
Lesson 1 Psalm 119:57-64
071325

Introduction & Review My Portion Part 1

- 1 Over the last ten years there has been a growing movement in our country that says we don't need all the stuff we have and that we would be much happier if we would simplify our lives down to what we really need, down to the bare essentials.
 - a Officially this movement is called "minimalism." There is a 2015 documentary by the same name and it's had over 80 million views.
 - b The place you are probably most familiar with this minimalistic thinking is in the tiny house phenomena where people downsize from an average home size of 2200 square feet to about 200 square feet.



- c VRBO and Airbnb even have vacation tiny houses you can rent. There's no way I would spend my vacation in that, but apparently some people do.
 - d Now some people downsize into tiny houses for economic reasons but others are driven by the quest to simplify their lives down to what is really necessary, what they really need.
- 2 So if we were to apply the tiny house minimalism to more than our housing ... if we were to apply it to our whole life ... what do we really need in life? What is our most basic, bare essential need?
 - a Last week we discovered that when you peel back all the layers, when you get to the core our greatest need in life ... that need is for God himself.
 - We were created to know God and fellowship with God ... to be with God. That is our most basic need.
 - Nothing in all of life, not even God's good gifts for this life, can ultimately satisfy the deepest need of our heart. Only God himself.

- b No matter how wonderful the gifts or blessings of God's common grace may be, there is no substitute for the Person and presence of God in our lives.
- 3 Throughout the Bible, particularly in the Psalms, there is a phrase that captures this truth and that phrase is this: The Lord is my portion. Last week we considered that phrase and its use throughout the Bible.
 - a Its origin goes all the way back to the Jewish patriarch Abraham. But is most recognized in connection with a promise God made to the tribe of Levi, one of the twelve tribes of Israel.
 - b As the fledgling nation of Israel was entering the Promise land God allocated a portion of land to each of the twelve tribes with the exception of the tribe of Levi, who would become the priests for the whole nation.
 - c He said to the Levites, I'm not going to give you a portion of land. I'm going to give you something better for your portion. I am going to give you myself. I will be your portion.
- 4 Eventually the phrase was used to describe someone who valued their relationship with God above all else. So when we say the Lord is my portion, we are expressing a spiritual aspiration that says ...
 - a I don't want anything else to be more important than you Lord. I don't want anything else to occupy my heart as the ultimate object of my affection.
 - b I don't want any idol to root itself in my heart. I don't want any good blessing of God to replace God. I want God alone to my portion.
- 5 Now why is this so important?
 - a Well every day you and I are in a spiritual battle in which our three enemies, the world, flesh and devil are simultaneously working to deceive us into making something other than God our portion.
 - b That's exactly what happened to Adam and Eve in the garden. Satan convinced them that the fruit of a created tree in the midst of the garden was better than the Creator himself. And there are all kinds of fruit trees in our life that can become our substitute portion. We're in a battle.
- 6 This week we are going to begin a new mini-series in which we will learn how to win this battle, how to keep the Lord as our portion.
 - a Our text for the series will be Psalm 119, verses 57-64. The psalm begins with the declaration, "You are my portion O Lord" and then is followed by several statements that explain how the psalmist makes and

keeps the Lord as his portion. In summary he does it through his love for God's Word.

- b As we read it you will see that God's word is referred to eight different synonyms in this passage; Your words, your promise, your statutes, your commands, your law, your righteous laws, your precepts and your decrees.
- c These are all synonyms that describe the nature of God's Word. And attached to each one of these synonyms is a particular disposition, action or attitude of the Psalmist that reveals how much he loves and honors God's Word. Let's do a quick flyover.

An Overview of Psalm 119:57-64

⁵⁷ You are my portion, Lord; I have promised to **obey** *your words*.

- He has an intentional predisposition to obey God's Word. But not just obey as in following the rules, but obey in the sense of drawing closer and deepening his relationship with the Lord.
- That's why in verse 58 he says ...

⁵⁸ I have **sought** your face with all my heart; be gracious to me according *to your promise*.

- In other words I need an impartation of grace through the Word, aka your promise) so that I will be empowered to seek You with all my heart AND also examine my heart in self reflection....v59).

⁵⁹ I have considered my ways and have **turned** my steps to *your statutes*.

- When he reads the Word he self-reflects, discovers hidden sin and then realigns or turns to God's statutes through repentance.
- And he does not do this dragging his feet. Verse 60 says,

⁶⁰ I will **hasten** and not delay to obey *your commands*.

- And not just when it is easy. But when it's hard. When I'm under pressure. Verse 61 even when ...

⁶¹ Though the wicked bind me with ropes, I will **not forget** (disregard) *your law*.

- If there comes a time when he I am tested and would benefit from momentarily ignoring your Word, I will not forget the Word.
- Even if the pressure from the wicked is so great can't sleep.

⁶² At midnight I rise to **give you thanks** for *your righteous laws*.

⁶³ **I am a friend** to all who fear you, to all who follow *your precepts*.

- The Lord remains my portion because my closest friends are those who follow your precepts).

⁶⁴ The earth is filled with your love, Lord; teach me *your decrees*
(Psalm 119:57–64)

- Teach me your decrees ... so that you remain my portion.

1 Now we are not going to drill down on each one of these but we will unpack a few of them in the next two weeks. And the reason is that it is important every once and while in the life of a church to reemphasize the centrality of the Scriptures in our lives.

2 There is no way for us to stay close to God ... for God to be our portion ... without the habit of being with him in his Word.

a There is no way to experience newness of life, transformation of character and growth in Christlikeness without the Living Bread that Jesus implored us to eat daily.

b Daily reading his Word, meditating on his Word, studying his Word, discussing his Word, praying his Word and singing his Word is indispensable. Colossians 3 says,

Let the message (Word) of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts (Colossians 3:16).

- Let it dwell in you richly so that something other than God will not become your portion.
- Let it dwell in you so richly that your desire for God remains foremost in your life.

3 So what the psalmist is saying in this passage is ...

a You are my portion O Lord and I meet with you and experience you as my portion through your words, promise, statutes, commands, law, precepts and decrees.

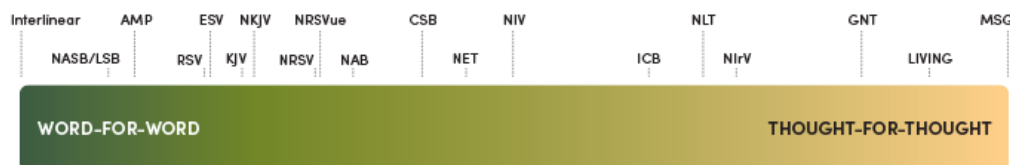
b Therefore I will obey, seek, turn to, not forget and give thanks to you for your Word. That personal pursuit of God's Word is what we'll come back to next week.

- 4 For the rest of this morning I want to address a couple items related to our corporate pursuit of God's Word. I want to answer two questions
 - a Which *version of the Bible* do we use and why?
 - b Which *form of the Bible* do we encourage and why?

[1] Which version of the Bible do & will we use and why?

- 1 About two years ago I mentioned something in a sermon about officially choosing a version/translation that we would use on Sunday morning in all teaching and preaching from the pulpit.
 - a The reason was at that time I was considering switching from the NIV to the ESV for reasons I will get to in a moment.
 - b In the beginning days of GFC we used the NKJV. A few years later we switched to the NASB95. For the last 20+ years we have used the NIV84&2011.
- 2 Without doing a deep dive into Bible translation let me just say that most major translations are very faithful to the original texts, Old Testament Hebrew, New Testament Greek. The difference lies not in *accuracy* of interpretation but in *philosophy* of interpretation of which there are two; word for word translation or thought for thought translation.

Bible Translation Guide



- a On left side you have translations that are more word for word or more literal (NASB, ESV, KJV, NKJV).
- b On the right side you have translations that are more thought for thought or more readable like the NLT, GNT (Good New Translation) and the original LB.
- c And then you have the extreme thought for thought translations like the Message which I would avoid and the Passion Translation which I would throw away because it is produced by a guy who doesn't know Hebrew or Greek.

- d Now in between these two book ends are translations that essentially combine word for word and thought for thought like the NIV, HCSB/CSB, NET (New English).
- 3 OK let's talk advantages/disadvantages.
- a The thing that is great about the translations that are more thought for thought is that they help you understand the meaning of the original text more easily.
- But in the attempt to make it easier to understand they can become more of a commentary than a translation.
 - The translation team has to take a bit of liberty. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but one that can result in missing the intent of the original text.
- b On the other hand the thing that is great about translations that are more word for word is they are great for study and drilling down on one particular word or phrase in the text.
- But words in one language seldom have exact matches in other languages and often there shades of meaning lost in a word for word translation.
 - Word for word translations also tend to be clunky when it comes to reading and harder to comprehend the meaning.
- 4 That is why Violet and I, after spending a year reading the ESV together, decided to go back to reading the NIV.
- a We would come to a passage that was hard to comprehend and then read the NIV and go, "Oh that what that means." The NIV is just easier to understand and that is why we have stuck with the NIV for Sunday morning teaching and preaching.
- b It's not a perfect translation, there isn't one. But most of the issues people have with any translation, including the NIV, are based on not fully understanding the science of Bible translation.
- c I love the ESV and use it along with most of the major translations in my study but will continue to use the NIV for public reading and teaching of the Scriptures.
- d But there is another reason for using the NIV that has to do with the I of NIV. The NIV was also designed for international readers for whom English is their second language ... and that's a lot of people in South Florida. For a deeper dive I will post a link in the sermon notes.

<https://www.biblegateway.com/learn/bible-101/bible-versions-guide>

[2] Which form of the Bible do we encourage (digital or print) and why?

- 1 With the advent of the smart phone the way we do life has changed in many ways. From GPS navigation to checking into your doctor appointment to shopping online for groceries.
- 2 In today's digital age, it's easy to rely on my smartphone for many things I do including my Bible study. With a few clicks or swipes, I can easily find what the Bible says about anything, compare different translations, perform a quick word search, and easily share a favorite verse with someone across town or across the world.
- 3 But with all the power and convenience a digital Bible provides, it has not ... and cannot replace a physical, print Bible. I still prefer to use a print version for my reading of Scripture.
 - a And according to the latest statistics most people feel the same way. Over 90% of regular Bible readers prefer a print Bible over a digital Bible and three out of four millennials agree.
 - b Why? Let me give you a few reasons why most people prefer a physical "print" Bible.

Advantages of Print Bible

1 Using a print Bible limits distractions.

- a When you are reading the Bible or listening to it being taught you need to focus and avoid distractions.
 - It's a serious thing when God's Word is being taught. Focus can be the difference between spiritual life or spiritual death, being set free or remaining bound, seeing truth or remaining blind.
 - All it takes is a little distraction. And that is exactly what smart phones end up doing.
- b Even when we silence the notifications we still get interrupted by the buzz or the banners. It could be email, Instagram, Facebook or a weather notification. But it distracts us and subsequently tempts us to check Facebook or Instagram or something else.
- c Does using a print Bible fix this heart issue? No. But using a print Bible is a practical thing we can do to remove the digital noise and allow us to read and listen to his Word being taught without unnecessary distraction.
- d Additionally, reading a print Bible sets apart or makes your Bible reading time distinct from other reading.

- Research indicates that the average person picks up their smart phone 58 times a day. If you pick up your smart phone all day every day, what's different about picking up your phone the read the Bible. It's no different to your brain than scrolling through Instagram, Facebook, or your favorite news app.
- Reading the Bible should be unique and special. It should feel different to your mind and body than reading content authored by human beings.
- God's Word, is infinitely more important than any other content you read and we should set it apart in our minds and hearts and something special, something we revere. John Calvin once said, *"We owe to the Scripture the same reverence which we owe to God, because it has proceeded from him alone."*

2 Using a print Bible increases retention.

- a My parents gave me my first Bible in 1981. I still have it after all these years.
 - It has handwritten notes in it, smudges on it, worn areas and dog eared pages all of which are like landmarks guiding me to a chapter and verse and sometimes even remind me of a particular season in my walk with Jesus.
 - That print Bible is like an old friend to me. In fact all three Bibles I have used extensively in my life are like old friends.
- b I don't get that from my Bible app. It's search engine has a lot of power but it has no landmarks, there is no oil from my hands on the pages and there is nothing of my journey with Jesus to be seen on it's glowing screen.
- c Today, it's widely accepted that our memories are ***visuospatial*** in nature. We remember things not just by seeing them but by seeing their spatial location.
 - With a digital Bible Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1 are in the same physical space. But with a physical Bible they are in different places. And as you navigate from one verse to another you can see how far into the Bible it is and therefore have a sense of where it is located in the narrative of the Bible.

- This spatial awareness is not only true with books of the Bible but also chapters & verses in the Bible. Each page is individually numbered and distinct in appearance and format ... a format that never changes. I can still see where Romans 8 is in my NKJB Bible; right page, left column ten lines down from the top. I can easily find it without zooming or scrolling or doing a search.
 - A print Bible also has a certain size and shape and weight and thickness that subtly changes depending on which part you're reading from.
 - All this means that a print Bible consistently engages more of our senses. The result? Stronger memories and therefore greater retention.
 - A digital Bible offers none of those things. It is a disembodied text, stripped of the sensory advantages of a print Bible. The words are never in the same place on the page and the page disappears into a chip on your phone or cyberspace itself. It is not with you like a print Bible.
- d So, when you sit down at church and the person next to you pulls out their print Bible and you pull out your phone and both look up the same passage, you may be reading the same words but you are not reading the same way.
- The print Bible offers more of an opportunity to store up God's word in your heart.
 - I'm not suggesting that if you forget your print Bible don't use a digital Bible. Nor am I suggesting that if you use a print Bible you'll become a walking concordance. What I am saying is that you will experience God's word in a way that will be more beneficial.

3 Using a print Bible provides more context.

- a The meaning of a verse can only be determined in the context of the passage and the passage can only be rightly understood in the context of the chapter.
- b Having the surrounding verses in view helps you understand the context better. For example, let's say you're reading the parable of the lost coin in Luke 15:8-10.
 - In a print Bible, you'll immediately notice that it's located between the parable of the lost sheep and the parable of the prodigal son and

you'll come to understand that Jesus is telling the same story three ways.

- With a digital Bible you will initially miss all that. And with most Bible apps you will also miss seeing the end of one chapter and the beginning of another at the same time and therefore be deprived of the Bible's sense of continuity.
 - On average, you can only see around four to seven verses on your phone screen. Scrolling doesn't give you more verses, it just changes the verses you have. You simply can't see enough at any one time to discern themes or map out a writer's argument.
 - You could use a tablet but the net effect remains the same: you only see the parts, not the whole. It's not until you physically hold the entire Bible in your hands that you get a sense of the Bible as one book rather than a series of disconnected passages on a screen.
- c So, unless you're already familiar with the wider context of a passage, the use of a digital Bible hampers your ability to understand it.
- Now that's not a big problem for those of us who grew up with a print Bible and then started using a digital Bible.
 - But it is problem for the younger generations who have never known a world without a smart phone or iPad.
- d Does this mean that we shouldn't use digital Bibles? No. But we need to use digital Bibles less, not more. And this is true concerning many of our digital conveniences.
- We need less social media and more actual in person togetherness and hospitality. We need more handwritten letters and less emails, more board games and less video games Our kids need less screen time and more outside time. Fire Alexa and get rid of a few apps.
 - In this digital world we need to rediscover analog life ... and by analog life I mean embracing physical, tactile, non-digital ways of interacting with the world.
- 1--Over the last couple of years people are starting to realize this.
Prior to 2020 Barnes and Nobel was a company in decline.
- 2--But people started wanting physical books and a place to connect with other who wanted the same.



3--As a result over the last five years Barnes and Nobel bookstore opening shave skyrocketed from 3 in 2020 to 60 in 2025. It's a bookstore revival.

- e A couple years ago our adult children bought me a receiver and turntable a for my birthday. Years ago we use to listen to music on these spinning discs made of vinyl called record albums. The sound was transmitted through a through a needle called a stylus attach to the end of the tone arm that moved the stylus across the grooves of the album.



- When I listen to an album on my turntable it doesn't sound as clean mp3 or wav file because of dust and scratches on the album but sonically it sounds warmer because it is less compressed and more natural.
 - On the other hand it's sure convenient to have Spotify via Bluetooth on my phone when I am working in the yard, working out or waiting in the doctor's office.
- f We need to use digital but not be used by it. Twenty years ago I thought we needed to use this digital medium much more to the point where we started displaying the main text of the Sunday morning message on the screen.
- It was helpful for all to read from one translation and accommodating to seekers and new Christians who were not in the habit of bringing a Bible with them.
 - But it backfired. It actually trained people to not bring their Bible. We became dependent upon the screen. Ultimately, it moved people away from a print Bible and the advantages it has over a digital Bible.
- g I don't want to do that and that's why beginning in August we will no longer be displaying the main Bible passage we are studying on the screen. That's why I am asking you to bring a NIV Bible each Sunday.
- You may prefer another translation and that's fine. I used them all. But for Sunday morning preaching and teaching it would be

profitable for all of us to read from one translation. I'm not saying don't use your Bible apps. But I believe you will benefit more by bringing and using a physical Bible, the one that you read out of.

- What about those who are visiting or who are newbies to Christianity? We've got that covered and I'm sure you have recently noticed book racks and chair pockets with Bibles throughout the sanctuary.
 - By next week we will be fully stocked and from that point on you will not only hear me say please open your Bible to such and such a verse but also and if you don't have Bible with you there is one available in the rack or pocket in front of you and we will be begin this morning on page so and so.
- h When I first became a Christian I remember that phrase on Sunday morning, "Open your Bible to ...". Initially I didn't know where every book of the Bible was located. But over time I learned. I learned the structure and contours of the Bible. I developed a familiarity with the text.
- With a print Bible you have to learn where the books of the Bible are. You can't turn to Ephesians without knowing its in the NT and that it's after Galatians but before Philippians and Colossians.
 - Why is that important? Because even the order of the books in the Bible are important. From Genesis to Revelation the order of the books tell the story of redemption.

Conclusion

- 1 Ultimately, whether you use a print Bible or digital Bible, what matters most is that you are encountering God in his Word. That's what the psalmist was doing. And at the end of the passage he says, *The earth is filled with your love, Lord; teach me your decrees (Psalm 119:64).*
- 2 The word for love is that special word for love in the OT, hesed. It means loyal, faithful, merciful, gracious love. And because of it we can also say, Lord teach me your decrees. Lord, reveal your word to us.

Discussion Questions

- 1 What does it mean when the Psalmist says, "The Lord is my portion"? According to the Psalmist how can you make and keep the Lord as your Portion?
- 2 Read Psalm 119:57–64. Which of the Psalmist's actions or attitudes toward God's Word stands out to you most, and why? How does this inspire or convict you in your current approach to Scripture?
- 3 The sermon emphasized that regularly engaging with Scripture is essential to keeping the Lord as our portion. What specific practices help you stay connected to God through His Word? What obstacles tend to interfere with these practices?
- 4 The sermon stated that reading a print Bible "feels different" than reading on a screen. Have you experienced this? What differences have you noticed in how you engage emotionally or spiritually with the text?
- 5 How does the *contextual visibility* of a print Bible (seeing surrounding chapters and books) help your understanding of Scripture? Can you share an example where this helped you understand a passage more clearly?
- 6 The sermon mentioned that the digital Bible lacks the sense of *sacred space* or set-apartness. Do you think using a print Bible helps cultivate reverence or focus? Why or why not?
- 7 What practical steps could you take to start using a physical Bible more consistently — at church, in daily devotions, or in Bible study? What would be the biggest challenge to making that change?