

God's Way

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[0 : 00] Good morning again everybody.

This morning we're going to be turning our attention to Psalm 119. We're going to be looking at verses 9 through 16. So I'm going to invite you now to turn there if you haven't done it yet. And while you do that I'm going to just lay a bit of a foundation for what we're going to be doing this morning. This portion of scripture deals with purity. And throughout the centuries there's been a heavy concentration on sexual purity in this passage.

And that's justified. But it certainly isn't limited to sexual purity. We will be dealing with that in a large part this morning.

Now this passage makes an appeal to the young man. But it's not limited to only young men. Young women, especially young women today, would be wise to heed what's offered here this morning.

[1 : 24] I've worked with many youth groups since I was 16 years old. And I've been able to see some of the things that young people are faced with. Both in the past, today.

And I've heard some conversations. I've been a part of some conversations. So I know that this is definitely needed. We always need in the church to address sexual purity.

Now young people in particular are susceptible to sexual temptations. They don't have the benefit of experiences.

And they're more likely to follow their passions. So it is very appropriate to put a good emphasis on young people.

Especially in today's culture where we have a hyper-sexualized media. There are apps and there are websites where you could order sexual encounters just as casually as ordering pizza.

[2 : 31] And this is the type of world that our young people are growing up in. This is the things that they face. So I especially have our teens and our young adults in mind this morning.

Because the world is holding out sex to them every day. And it's seeking to normalize all kinds of sexual behaviors and ideas that are outside of what God has prescribed for us.

So it's important to address this. I know that not all of us will be comfortable with everything that we touch on today. But I've gone through great lengths to keep how we address these things at a certain decorum.

And I hope that that is helpful to everyone. And the second foundational point I want to make is that this is not solely for young people. The very first verse in this psalm reads, Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord.

It says, blessed are those. So there's no limitation there to age. There's no limitation or restriction to gender. Gender. Every one of us needs what's contained in this passage today.

[4 : 01] So as much as I deliver this to the young people, I deliver it to those of us who are older. I include myself in that. We all need what's being held out here this morning.

This is a message for all of us. So may we all listen. May we all truly hear. And may we all heed today.

So let's read Psalm 119, verses 9 through 16. How can a young man keep his way pure?

By guarding it according to your word. With my whole heart I seek you. Let me not wander from your commandments. I have stored up your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

Blessed are you, O Lord. Teach me your statutes. With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth. In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches.

[5 : 08] I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. I will delight in your statutes. I will not forget your word.

Let's pray. Dear God and Father, your word is a light to us, Lord. It shows us where we are walking and how we should walk.

Lord, your word is life. We pray, Lord, that we would see your light. We would walk in it. We would walk in your life. And may we see that we need you to accomplish what you've called us to.

So we pray for your word. We pray for the power it has to transform us. And we pray, Lord, that each and every one will truly hear and truly hear this morning. In Christ's name we pray. Amen. Red Table Talk is a popular talk show on the Facebook platform. [6 : 17] It's hosted by three generations of women. Jada Pinkett Smith, who is the wife of the actor, Will Smith. Jada's mother, Adrienne.

And Jada's daughter, Willow, who is 20 years old. On the April 18th issue of Red Table Talk, Jada Smith began with these words.

Willow and her Pauly Armory explorations. I love it. This is Jada Smith talking about her daughter, Willow.

This is what she says again. She continues. Do you believe in monogamy? Being with one person romantically and sexually till death, do you part, honey?

For many younger people like Willow, the answer is no. Instead, they are choosing polyarmory, which means having multiple emotional and romantic partners at the same time.

[7 : 33] And Jada immediately asks her daughter why she decided she would have relationships with multiple people. And Willow replies, and this is her quote, With polygamy, I feel like the main foundation is the freedom to be able to create a relationship style that works for you.

And not just stepping into monogamy because everyone around you says it's the right thing to do. And from a biblical perspective, we should immediately see something that is a very huge problem with Willow's statement.

And I'm not just talking about the conclusion that Pauly Armory is a good or an acceptable choice. But I'm talking about the way she arrives at the conclusion.

The big problem is the source she uses. She relies on how she feels. She relies on her own rationalization.

She makes herself her own authority. And that often leads to error. This morning we will examine a number of these faulty rationalizations.

[8 : 49] But more importantly, we will see how the text gives an error-free solution to living a life that's pure or holy. So when we talk about purity, we're talking about holy living.

We're talking about being distinct and being set apart for God and God's purposes. And that definitely includes our sexual conduct.

Though it's not limited to it. And the solution that's set before us this morning is in the Scripture. This morning the Scriptures tell us that avoiding error in our living comes down to being guided by God's Word.

The text this morning tells us that God's holy people are guided by God's Word above human understanding.

God's holy people are guided by God's Word above human understanding. And this morning I want us to look at the text under four main headings.

[10 : 00] The truth, the technique, the tool, and the transformation. First, the truth. How can a young man keep his way pure?

By guarding it according to your Word. The first thing we ought to notice is that God is central in this verse.

The whole activity that the young man in this verse goes by centers around God. And that's because there is a standard by which we should measure and live our lives.

There is an absolute truth. And it is established by God. And you might look through the verse and say, well, I don't see anything about truth.

But you see God. And there's a reason for that. You see, we have to know and be able to distinguish what is good, what is bad, what is righteous, what is unrighteous, what is pure, what is unpure.

[11 : 12] And for that we need to know that there is absolute truth. And that is established by God. Now, you might say that's obvious.

But there are people, sometimes they call themselves enlightened people, who would disagree with that. They said the truth is relative. And that we all have a different truth.

We can all live according to what works for us. And no one has a right to say one way is not pure. But that's not what we're reading here this morning.

Many people who advance this relative truth argument are intellectuals. And for our university students, you might have encountered them, or you may encounter them, in your universities.

And those of you who are preparing for university, you may encounter them as well, if not now, soon. So they claim that there is no absolute truth.

[12:14] And it's ironic because they conflict themselves. You may have a university professor who says that there is no absolute truth, but on an examination they might put in true or false questions, which would be a contradiction.

So in fact, the relative truth argument is very flawed. Many of these intellectuals want you to believe that it's silly to believe in God.

They want you to feel foolish for believing in God. And many of us fall for that. We might feel embarrassed. We might feel like these are people who outwit us.

We may actually find ourselves questioning our beliefs. But we can't be guided by our feelings. Our feelings are fallible.

We must be guided by God's way. And we must be guided by God's truth. And God's truth assures us in Romans 1 that we can know that God really exists just by opening our eyes and seeing the nature that he has intelligently designed around us.

[13:31] And part of Romans 1 reads, For his invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world and the things that have been made.

So they are without excuse. So in other words, there's no excuse for denying God's existence. And in fact, Psalm 14 says that it is the fool who says in his heart, There is no God.

And God's truth also assures us that in the beginning it was he who created all things. So God's truth is established. And as the ruler of all things, he gets to make the rules.

We ought to follow in God's way. Instead, we hear a lot of people talk about their truth. It's that everybody has their truth.

But that's a wrong statement to make. People may have different perceptions. They may have different opinions. But there's only one truth.

[14:45] And that truth is the reality determined by God. In fact, God is truth. And he is the source of truth. So when we attack truth, as we would have heard R.C. Sproul say, those of you who are following our weekly Bible studies, when we attack truth, we are ultimately attacking God.

And just to give an example that should be clear to everyone who is in this room at least, I can walk around all day saying that I'm six feet tall.

That could be my truth. I might live in my truth. I'm six feet tall. But when you put out a ruler, and I stand next to the ruler, the truth, not my truth, is clear to see.

And that's what we're facing in today's world. Everyone has something that they want to be true. They may even feel that it's true. But God is the real standard.

He is the measuring tape that we must place against our thoughts, and against our feelings, to learn what reality is. So I'm, in case you're thinking, I'm telling you not to think, and not to reason, and not to go through things in your mind, I'm not doing that.

[16:12] I am telling you to think. I am telling you to reason. But I'm telling you not to do it without regard to the ways of God. Never rationalize and question without measuring things against the standard, which is God.

He is the test of truth. So there's absolute truth. There is absolute truth. And in that truth, we are called to a life of purity.

God calls us to purity, and he decides what purity is. But how do we do this? How do we accomplish this in practical ways?

Well, that brings us to our second point, which is the technique. Still in verse 9, we are told we keep our way pure by guarding our way.

To say it clearly, we have to put restrictions on what we allow ourselves to do. Verse 9 says that we have to guard our way, and just picture that for a moment.

[17:22] Let's picture what it is to guard something. It means we are to be on alert. We are not to let anything pass us. We are to arrest anything that's unauthorized that comes in our way.

It's like a policeman, like a soldier, always on guard. And we have to acknowledge that there are people who don't desire to do this. They have no intention of guarding their way or restricting their behavior.

I mean, to see how dangerous that is. Because if we do not guard our way, it means that we are open to letting anything in. So human reasoning calls this being open-minded.

They say things like, let's not judge. Don't judge me. But we have to judge. Judging is a sensible process. When we judge, we are choosing. We are deciding. We are evaluating. And you do it every day. When you go into the food store, you have to judge between brands. And when you're deciding on a college, you have to judge between which ones offer the best programs, which ones offer you the best chance for success.

[18 : 39] So when we judge between sexual conduct and other types of conduct, we are doing the same thing. We are simply evaluating whether or not that conduct meets God's standard of truth. It's not our personal standard. It's a standard set by God for our good and His glory. And we don't need to feel guilty for applying God's standard. Because that's what it comes down to. People who say, hey, don't judge me. Let's not judge. They're really employing a tactic. It's a psychological tactic. And the idea is to cause us to feel as though we're launching a personal attack on them. And that's not so. We're simply evaluating their conduct and employing God's standard, not our own.

So the don't judge me tactic is also a subtle way of reinforcing this idea of there's no absolute truth, that everything is relative. It's saying that we're all just people.

[19 : 51] no one's opinion has more authority than the other. But the truth is that God is perfect. And He has authority over all things. And we are called to stand on His authority and hold to His standard of purity. So young people, I want to emphasize to you especially that it's important for us to evaluate. And it's important for you to be discriminant about what you allow yourself to be involved with. Because restricting our actions actually protects us. You know, we like to think if we're young that the older people are trying to ruin our fun. But really, God's guidelines protects us. Because if we don't guard our way, we're opening ourselves up to something outside of God's word and it's a slippery slope. So, you start off in the wrong direction, you might end up tumbling off a cliff and you don't know where you're going to end up.

[21 : 05] You know, in our parents' generations, someone talks about this passage and they speak about the importance of marriage and not indulging in sex outside of marriage. And we do that today. But also today, I'm opening up with a quote about polyamory. And I think it's necessary, it's instructive because sin is so progressive. As the saying goes, if you give it an inch, it goes a mile. So, if you start to accept that sex relations outside of marriage is okay, it's acceptable, it's normal, where do you end up? Do you end up accepting pedophilia? You say, that's okay? Maybe you say pansexualism is okay, or omnisexualism, or demisexualism, or sapiosexualism. I see some of the older folks there looking very confused right now. You don't know what in the world they are. I'll tell you what, ask your children. Ask the teens and the 20-somethings, the low 30-somethings, ask them.

[22 : 27] I can almost guarantee you they have an idea. This is their world. This is what we have come up with in this modern era. And actually, I'm hoping that the message today provides us with an opportunity. It's an opportunity for us to have conversations. Because we can't assume that we know what our children are exposed to as much as we try to protect them. We can't assume that we know what's influenced them. We can't assume that we know what they think, what they've opened their minds up to consider. So it's important that you have those discussions. And I would have to say that it's important, too, that the kids have, the children have some guarantees. For example, they have to know that if they speak to you, you won't kill them. They have to know that if you speak to them, you'll be rational. They'd want to be honest with you because very likely, at first, they won't be honest with you. But, young ones, I want to encourage you to be honest with your parents and have those talks.

[23 : 39] And I think that you will benefit as much as they would no matter how uncomfortable it is. Some of you land on polyamory, like Miss Willow Smith. And the guest that she had on that show, Red Table Talk, that I talked about. And I promise you this has been heavily edited. I sanitized this as much as I thought I could.

But I thought it was important to see an example of what is acceptable to many young people today. So the main guest on that show was a lady by the name of Miss Gabrielle Smith. and she apparently has no relation to Will Smith and the people who host that show. But she lives with another woman named Erin and she refers to Erin as a life partner. Doug is Gabrielle's sexual partner. But another man, Alex, is Gabrielle's boyfriend. boyfriend. So Gabrielle has a life partner, she has Doug a sexual partner, and she has Alex who is her boyfriend. [24 : 56] Meanwhile, Alex, who is Gabrielle's boyfriend, he has a wife, and Alex's wife has a boyfriend. His name is Jeff.

And they're all happy with their polyamorous arrangement. I'm not trying to single out the Smith family.

Those of you who are familiar with Pop Club, you know that they get a lot of bad rap. But it just so happened that this show was a good example of where we could end up when we start creating our own arrangements.

The truth is, a lot of the views that they shared on that show are very acceptable to some of our younger people.

And maybe even some of our older people, I don't know. So with that in mind, we can see the effects of impurity on us as a society, as a whole.

[26 : 05] So yeah, that show provided the perfect example of what we're talking about today. With an arrangement like what they mentioned on the show, they have decided their own boundaries with no restrictions, apparently, and they believe that that's fine.

The truth is that God has declared sovereign boundaries for us, and we are foolish when we presume that we know better than the God of the universe.

Christ himself said in Matthew 19 and 4, have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

So holding fast to your wife does not mean, in case it's not clear, does not mean allowing your wife to have a boyfriend.

So this is what we see in Matthew 19, that's God's plan. That's his instruction to us. Man and woman, husband and wife, one flesh.

[27 : 21] So it's very dangerous when we venture into the arrangements that we cook up for ourselves. It's dangerous because living according to our own way denies God.

It denies the truth. And when we deny the truth, we fall under judgment. And I'm going to quickly refer to Romans 1, verses 21 to 25.

And it's speaking about those who suppress the truth. It says, for although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him.

But they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

Therefore, God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the creator, who is blessed forever.

[28 : 42] Amen. Amen. The way the scripture describes judgment here is striking to me. In verse 24 of Romans 1 it says, God gave them up to lusts of their hearts to impurity.

And it shows how desirable purity should be to us. And I looked up the definition of purity at dictionary.com and here's what the first entry says.

it says, the condition or quality of being pure. Freedom from anything that debases, contaminates, or pollutes.

so in our natural mind, in the flesh, we would think that indulging in our lusts is happiness. But the scriptures show us that actually it's a grotesque thing because sexual gratification outside of God's prescribed ways is actually idolatry.

And it debases us. It devalues us. It's an attack on our dignity as the image bearers of God.

[30 : 01] That's why it's worth the effort to guard our way and to remain within the sovereign boundaries that God established.

Doing those things preserves our value. We ought to see our sexual character as something that is valued and things that are valued.

They're not given away easily. They're precious. They're not common. They're cherished. And when we cherish our sexual character, we preserve the dignity that God has given us. Let's look at the tool. God has ordained that his word should be the tool we would use to maintain purity.

God's We don't guard our way by our feelings or by the study of great philosophers. We guard our way according to God's word as verse 9 says.

[31 : 09] And God's word is the entirety of scripture. It's everything that God has uttered, everything that he has caused to be written. But verses 10 and 12, they single out God's law, his commandments and his statutes.

In verse 10, the psalmist says, With my whole heart I seek you, that we not wonder from your commandments. And Timothy Trico last week impressed upon us the crucial importance of God's commandments.

In particular, the Ten Commandments. And fortunately, as he pointed out, a lot of people, they see the Ten Commandments more like the Ten Suggestions. But they are commandments.

We are commanded to follow them. And they employ all kinds of reasoning. They adopt things to say that there can be an exception here, there can be an exception there.

We want to live morally, but we want to customize our own moral code. And we find loopholes to these commandments. And we can take the Ninth Commandment.

[32 : 15] What's the Ninth Commandment? There you go. There you should not bear false witness. I don't think any of us are going to forget that after last week. I mean, reason that we could bend the truth sometimes depending on the circumstances.

Like, for instance, if we feel someone's feelings are going to get hurt, we say, okay, we can tell a little white lie. Or if we're going to get in trouble, we can tell a little white lie. That's what we say. And we do the same thing when it comes to sex outside of marriage.

There's a loophole that through human reasoning tries to tell us that it's okay. And I'm sure you've heard it before. it says, according to the world, it's okay if you love him.

Or it's okay if you love her. As if love solves everything, makes everything right. But if we look at the seventh commandment, what's the seventh commandment?

Oh. If we need to give a price to an eke, thou shall not commit adultery. It's very simple, very straightforward, very plain. There's no fine print there.

[33 : 37] It's precise. It's clear. Simply, thou shall not commit adultery. And the moment we start to entertain exceptions, loopholes, we risk sinning against God.

We risk doing what Adam and Eve did in the Garden of Eden, questioning God. And just by the way, one of the commentaries I read about preparing, this is a very telling thing, the word used for God in verse 9, to guard our way, the commentators said in the original language, the same word that God gave to Adam in Genesis when he said to keep the garden.

So we keep our way by guarding it, the same way Adam was instructed to keep the garden of Eden. He was to care for it, cherish it, make sure that it flourished, protect it.

Unfortunately we saw Adam's failing and had disastrous consequences, not only for Adam and Eve, but for everyone who came after them.

So we can't entertain exceptions. Let's not be like Adam and Eve asking, did God really say?

[35 : 11] Let's not do that. let's trust God's word. We don't have to question God's word because the commandment is already plainly written for us.

So we should store up God's word in our heart as it says in verse 11. We do that through our Bible studies, we do that through our memorization of scripture, and we do this daily as a matter of how we live so that when the time of testing comes, temptation crosses our path, we do not sin against God.

It's all because we are guarding our way by means of God's word. I know a lot of this is really high in theology, but there are practical ways of restricting ourselves and restricting our behavior, avoiding sinning against God.

I just want to quickly share a couple of them with you. We can limit our temptations. We can intentionally limit our temptations. For example, being alone with people who we are sexually attracted to would not be something you would do.

That's not something that you want to place yourself in. we can keep godly friends. And keeping godly friends gives us someone to confide in, to confess our weaknesses and our temptations to.

[36 : 47] And they can help us watch over our way. That makes us accountable. We need those types of friends who can ask us, you know, I saw you with, I heard that.

Tell me about that. And why are you doing that? We have to make ourselves accountable. And that extends to our parents as well. Okay?

For those of us who are younger, especially living with our parents, be accountable to our parents. all right? So, if you think you've grown, and even if you've left the house, that accountability still works in your favor.

And we can remain in God's word, coming back to guarding ourselves according to God's word. When we're in God's word, we know exactly what his will is. We're not guessing, we're not believing ourselves.

open to exceptions. So, those are a few quick, practical things that we can do to guard our way, to use God's word.

[38 : 05] So, we have gone through verses 9-12 of Romans 1-19, and that's half of the text. I admit that there's a lot of work going on in those short verses, just four verses.

I mean, we see a lot of effort being expended to maintain our purity. We have to guard our way, we have to use God's word, we have to know his commandments, we have to learn his statutes. I mean, it could seem like we're doing a whole lot, it could seem almost exhausting. But I want you to also notice something. The first half of the text, I call that sovereign boundaries for my own purposes.

It spells out these divine restrictions that God places on us. It tells us how we ought to conduct ourselves. And we can think of this as a sort of training for purity.

But if you look at the next half of this passage, verses 13 to 16, you would notice a change in the tone of things. You would notice that there is a transformation that's taken place.

[39 : 27] Let's talk about this transformation. Notice that the second part of the passage is not laden with our efforts, but it's a tone of freedom.

It's almost celebratory in tone. Here we see a transformation in the psalmist. We see that training in purity brings us true joy.

You see that the psalmist is declaring the rules of God's mouth. If you take a moment to look at the note that's provided in the ESV, you'll see a little C there.

That word rule can be interpreted as God's just decree. So the psalmist now celebrates God's law as something that's just, something that's desirable.

He is delighting in God's testimonies, the things that God says about himself in scriptures. And he's seeing those testimonies as riches.

[40 : 30] In verse 15, the psalmist is meditating on God's precepts. precepts. So even when he's not reading the word, he's thinking on them, going over them and over them, showing how much he values them.

And the connotation of the precept, the word precept, is not quite the same as a law. A law is rigid, a law is formal. But a precept is a guide, it's a principle that we live by.

this is indicating that the psalmist now views the law differently. It's not a burden that he begrudgingly takes on, but instead it's a valued guide to his life.

And he's fixing his eyes on the ways of God, delighting in God's statutes and always automatically remembering God's word.

so training pays off. So we're able to see in this passage how God's commandments can be a guardian, it can be a tutor to us.

[41 : 38] It teaches us and it trains us as we walk in it. But along the way, God, he does something.

He allows the law to affect our hearts. It becomes written on our hearts. And eventually we desire purity, but we didn't desire it before.

And soon we value it, and we sincerely enjoy the things of God. Because God himself has done a work in us.

And really, God is working in us all along, from the start. Even when we are not aware of what he is doing.

So if we glance back at verses 9-12, we can see how God was really working all along when we thought we were doing so much work. Even as we strive to restrict our conduct, look at verse 10.

[42 : 43] It says, let me not wander from your commandments. commandments. So it's not just us keeping the commandments. We see that God is actually keeping us.

He's restraining us. He is enabling us to obey him. In verse 12, we see, blessed are you, O Lord. Teach me your statutes. Right now, for the last several months, we have been concentrating on verses to remember.

I know we are all so aware of the effort we are expending to learn God's word. The truth is, God's Holy Spirit is actually teaching us.

He's teaching us as we memorize. He's teaching us as we read scriptures, as we sit under the preaching of his word. The Spirit every day is giving us a better understanding of God and his will as we study our Bibles, as we memorize his word.

[43 : 57] God is giving us much grace, even when we're not aware of it. It's the perfect picture of sanctification when we look back at those beginning verses.

God comes alongside us as we strive to conform ourselves to the image of Christ. That's the only way that we can do what we are called to do.

We are called to purity. We are called to guard our way. and we're called to heed God's word over what the world calls wisdom.

That's God's way. And we need God's help to do this because like human wisdom, human efforts are not enough.

We need God's grace. grace. We need God's grace to accept the truth and to love his way rather than our own way.

[45 : 12] And he has grace. He has grace that is rich and free to us. So let's avail ourselves of it.

Let's pray. Father, we have heard your word. I pray, Lord, that we are challenged by your word.

I pray, Lord, that we are also convicted by your word. And Father, though at times it is hard and at times we are so aware of what we must do, of how we must work, Lord, we pray that you would remind us that you are working a greater way and you are transforming us.

Help us to love your truth. Bring about that transformation. Lord, cause us to not love the things we ought to hate, but cause us to hate the things that we ought to love, that we ought not love.

Father, we pray that your spirit will move in us. We pray that your spirit will indeed enable us to walk in purity, to walk in your ways, and to please you with our lives.

[46 : 50] We pray especially for our young people, Lord, that you would cause them, Lord, to walk before you in a way that's pleasing to you. We pray that you would put godly influences in their lives, and you would indeed accomplish the plan that you have ordained for their lives.

Bring them to your light, bring them to your truth, and cause your name to be praised through their witness. In Christ's name we pray.

Amen. Amen. I invite you to please stand as we prepare to sing the grace.