



FORMED BY THE WORD

A 6 PART STUDY ON THE BIBLE & SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Session 1: From 'Have To' to 'Want To'.

*Why don't I always want to follow
God?*

How to Use This Study

This study is designed to help you engage Scripture deeply and grow in your ability to recognize God's voice and follow Him in real life.

It can be used in several ways:

- for personal devotional study
- for one-on-one discipleship
- as part of a small group or larger group setting

Each session is built around a passage of Scripture and is meant to be worked through slowly and thoughtfully. The goal is not simply to complete the material, but to allow God's Word to shape how you think, how you trust, and how you live.

Using This Study Individually

If you are working through this study on your own, take your time with each session.

- Read each Scripture passage carefully
- Reflect on the teaching
- Write out your responses to the questions
- Return to key verses throughout the week

Do not rush. Spiritual growth happens through consistent, thoughtful engagement with God's Word.

Using This Study in a Group

If you are using this study in a group setting, each participant should complete the session **ahead of time during the week**.

The written portions are not meant to be completed during the group meeting. Instead, they prepare you for meaningful discussion.

When you gather as a group:

- discuss what stood out in the teaching
- share insights from your Scripture reading
- reflect on your written responses
- encourage one another in applying what you are learning



This approach allows group time to move beyond surface-level conversation into deeper engagement and shared growth.

Engaging Scripture

Throughout this study, you will be asked to look up and read passages of Scripture.

Participants are encouraged to **open their Bibles and read each passage directly**, rather than relying only on the study guide.

Group studies will use the **New Living Translation (NLT)** for consistency. However, you are welcome to use any translation that helps you best understand the text. Comparing translations can often deepen understanding and insight.

A Final Encouragement

This study is not about finding quick answers. It is about formation.

As you move through each session, the goal is not simply to learn more about Scripture, but to allow Scripture to shape your life.

Take your time. Be honest in your responses. Return to God's Word often.

And trust that as you do, God will continue the work He has begun in you.

Introduction – When Obedience Feels Like Obligation

Most people who follow Jesus believe obedience matters. They know Scripture is important. They want their lives to reflect their faith.

And yet, if they are honest, obedience can sometimes feel like pressure instead of desire.

- Reading Scripture feels like a task
- Prayer feels inconsistent
- Following God feels like something we *should* do, not something we *want* to do

Psalms 119 begins by challenging that assumption.

Read Scripture: Psalm 119:1–3

The psalmist describes a life that is *blessed*—not because it is easy, but because it is aligned with God.

The word “blessed” here does not mean happy in a temporary sense. It means **whole, steady, and complete**—a life that is no longer divided between competing desires.



This reveals an important truth:

The problem is not that God's Word is burdensome.

The problem is that our hearts are often divided.

God's goal is not simply to change behavior.

God's goal is to transform desire.

Reflection

When you think about following God right now, does it feel more like obligation or desire? Why?

Movement 1 – The Path of Wholeness

The psalmist describes faith as a **walk**—a direction over time.

Read Scripture: Psalm 119:1

Read Scripture: Psalm 1:1–3

A person shaped by God's Word is compared to a tree planted by water—stable, nourished, and able to endure different seasons.

This stands in contrast to how we often think about faith.

We tend to think:

- Faith is a decision
- Obedience is a moment
- Change should be immediate

But Scripture consistently presents formation as a process.

Read Scripture: Matthew 7:24–27

Jesus describes a life built on His words as a house built on rock. Stability is not created instantly—it is built over time through repeated alignment with truth.

This means:

- Faith is not about perfection



- Faith is about direction

A life aligned with God is not a life without struggle.
It is a life that is being steadily formed.

Reflection

Where in your life do you see evidence of spiritual growth over time (not instantly, but gradually)?

Where do you feel unstable or inconsistent right now? What might that reveal?

Movement 2 – Honest Longing and Internal Conflict

The psalmist does something important—he tells the truth.

Read Scripture: Psalm 119:4–8

He expresses a desire to obey, while acknowledging that his life does not fully reflect that desire.

This tension is not failure. It is reality.

Read Scripture: Romans 7:15–25

Paul describes the same internal conflict—wanting to do what is right, but struggling to live it out consistently.

This shows us something critical:

Spiritual maturity is not pretending the struggle doesn't exist.

It is bringing the struggle into the presence of God.

The psalmist does not hide the gap. He names it.

And that is where formation begins.

Read Scripture: Philippians 1:6

God is the one who continues the work He started.



This means:

- You are not responsible for transforming yourself
- But you are responsible for being honest before God

Reflection

Where do you feel the gap between what you know is right and how you are currently living?

What keeps you from closing that gap—fear, habits, distraction, something else?

Movement 3 – Formation Requires Participation

The psalmist moves from honesty into action.

Read Scripture: Psalm 119:9–11

He speaks of:

- guarding his life
- seeking God intentionally
- hiding God’s Word in his heart

This reveals a balance found throughout Scripture:

Read Scripture: Philippians 2:12–13

God works within us—but we also participate.

This is not:

- “try harder”
- or “do nothing”

It is cooperation.



The phrase “hidden in my heart” points to something deeper than reading.

It means:

- internalizing truth
- returning to it repeatedly
- allowing it to shape thinking and decision-making

Read Scripture: Joshua 1:8

Read Scripture: Psalm 1:2

Meditation is not speed-reading.

It is slow, repeated engagement.

Over time, what fills the heart shapes the life.

Read Scripture: Proverbs 4:23

What we allow into our inner life eventually directs our outer life.

Reflection

How do you currently engage with Scripture (frequency, depth, consistency)? Be specific.

What would it look like for God’s Word to become something you return to throughout the day—not just read once?

Movement 4 – Delight: When Obedience Becomes Desire

By the end of the passage, something changes.

Read Scripture: Psalm 119:12–16

The psalmist no longer sounds burdened. He sounds joyful.

- “I rejoice...”



- “I delight...”
- “I will not neglect...”

This is not forced obedience.

This is transformed desire.

Read Scripture: John 15:9–11

Jesus connects obedience with joy—not pressure.

Read Scripture: 1 John 5:3

God’s commands are not burdensome when they flow from love.

This reveals the goal of spiritual formation:

Not just changed behavior, but changed affection.

Think about any area of life:

- At first, discipline feels difficult
- Over time, it becomes natural
- Eventually, it becomes something you enjoy

The same is true spiritually.

God does not just ask you to follow Him.

He forms you into someone who wants to.

Reflection

Where have you experienced this pattern before—something difficult that became natural over time?

What would it look like for your relationship with God to move from discipline into delight?



Summary – From Obligation to Desire

Psalms 119 shows us that the Christian life is not about forcing obedience.

It is about being formed.

- God invites us into alignment
- He reshapes what we desire
- We participate through consistent engagement
- Over time, obedience becomes joy

The question is not simply:

“Am I doing what God says?”

But:

“Is God changing what I want?”

Final Reflection

What is one area of your life where God may be inviting you to move from “have to” into “want to”?

Practice for the Week

Set aside 10–15 minutes each day and engage Scripture intentionally:

- **Read** – Psalm 119:1–16 slowly
- **Reflect** – What stands out? What challenges you?
- **Respond** – Speak honestly with God
- **Return** – Revisit one verse throughout the day

Additionally:

Choose **one verse** this week to intentionally carry with you and return to multiple times each day.

The goal is not information—but formation.

