

STUDENT DISCUSSION GUIDE
Formed by the Word – Session 1
From “Have To” to “Want To”
Psalms 119:1–16

SESSION FOCUS

Following God can sometimes feel like obligation instead of desire. In this session, we explore how Scripture describes spiritual growth not as forced obedience, but as a process of formation. God’s goal is not only to change what we do, but to transform what we *want*. As we reflect on Psalm 119, we will consider how God shapes the heart over time through honest struggle, consistent engagement, and growing delight.

OPENING REFLECTION

Take a moment to reflect honestly.

- When you think about following God right now, does it feel more like obligation or desire?
- Are there spiritual practices that feel heavy, rushed, or pressured?
- What emotions come up when you think about obedience to God?

Personal Notes:

SCRIPTURE READING

Read **Psalm 119:1–16** slowly.

As you read, notice the movement in the psalm:

- From longing
- To honesty
- To joy and delight

Pay attention to the language of the heart, desire, and delight.

KEY IDEA

God’s goal is not forced obedience, but transformed desire.
Over time, obedience can move from obligation into joy.



PART 1: WHEN OBEDIENCE FEELS LIKE OBLIGATION

(Psalm 119:1–3)

The psalm begins by describing a life that is *blessed*—whole, steady, and aligned with God. Yet many people experience obedience as pressure rather than joy.

Reflection Questions

1. Why do you think following God can sometimes feel heavy or burdensome?
2. What do you think it means for a heart to be “divided”?
3. How does Psalm 119 challenge the idea that God’s Word is the problem?

Personal Notes:

PART 2: FAITH AS A DIRECTION, NOT A MOMENT

(Psalm 119:1; Psalm 1:1–3; Matthew 7:24–27)

Scripture describes faith as a *walk* and a *building process*. Growth happens over time through repeated alignment with God’s truth.

Reflection Questions

4. Where do you see evidence of spiritual growth over time in your life?
5. Where do you feel unstable or inconsistent right now?
6. How does viewing faith as a process change your expectations of yourself?

Personal Notes:

PART 3: HONEST STRUGGLE AND FORMATION

(Psalm 119:4–8; Romans 7:15–25)

The psalmist openly admits the gap between desire and action. Scripture shows that honesty about struggle is not failure—it is the starting point of formation.

Reflection Questions

7. Why is it sometimes hard to be honest about spiritual struggle?
8. Where do you feel the gap between what you want and how you live?
9. How does knowing that God continues the work He started affect your perspective?

Personal Notes:



PART 4: PARTICIPATING IN FORMATION

(Psalm 119:9–11; Philippians 2:12–13)

God forms us, but we participate by consistently returning to His Word. Formation is cooperation—not passivity and not self-effort alone.

Reflection Questions

10. How do you currently engage Scripture (frequency, pace, consistency)?
11. What does it mean to “hide” God’s Word in your heart?
12. What might change if Scripture became something you returned to throughout the day?

Personal Notes:

PART 5: WHEN OBEDIENCE BECOMES DELIGHT

(Psalm 119:12–16; John 15:9–11)

By the end of the passage, the tone changes. What began with longing turns into joy. Discipline slowly becomes delight.

Reflection Questions

13. Where have you experienced discipline turning into joy in other areas of life?
14. What would it look like for your relationship with God to move in that direction?
15. How does this passage reshape your understanding of obedience?

Personal Notes:

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Take a few quiet moments to reflect.

- Where might God be inviting you to move from “have to” into “want to”?
- What is one area where God may be reshaping your desires?

Personal Response:

CLOSING PRAYER



Ask God for honesty, patience, and trust in the process of formation.

Pray that God would not only guide your actions, but reshape your desires so that obedience flows from love and joy.

OPTIONAL PRACTICE FOR THE WEEK

This week:

- Re-read **Psalm 119:1–16** slowly each day
 - Choose **one verse** to return to throughout the day
 - Ask God regularly: *“What are You shaping in my heart?”*
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FINAL THOUGHT

God does not simply ask you to follow Him.

He forms you into someone who *wants* to.

When God’s Word shapes the heart, obedience becomes joy—not pressure.

