

The Statesman Recognizes Our Creator's Instruction Manual

The first thing each of us does when we receive a new piece of equipment is to study the instruction manual. The reason we do this is to learn from the designer how that equipment was intended to function and how we can best achieve the results intended by the designer. The same is true for our nations. We are not the designers but rather came into the picture long after their creation and are responsible to fulfill our stewardship in achieving the intent of the designer. We cannot even look to the Constitution and the original intent of the founders of our nation as our guides. In reality, the design was imposed by our Creator – Almighty God. Our first step is to gain confidence that our Creator has given us an instruction manual in the form of the Bible. Then, we will need to study that instruction manual with the intent to apply what we learn.

Let us begin with that first step -- understanding the Bible as God's instruction manual. There is one chapter in the Bible (of its 1,000+ chapters) that stands out. It is Psalm 119, which may be studied in detail via the link: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+119&version=HCSB>. This chapter is best viewed as God's introduction to His instruction manual. In this chapter, it emphasizes that the Bible is God's *instructions* 25 times, His *commands* 23 times, His *decrees* 23 times, His *precepts* 21 times, His *statutes* 22 times. Literally, it is a gold mine of insights into our Creator's instruction manual. It is relevant that such a chapter emphasizing the Bible as God's instruction manual is the longest in the Bible. Seemingly, our Creator intends it to be an extremely important chapter in the Bible as He seeks to help us understand the Bible to be His instruction manual. Let us briefly look at a few examples in the first few verses of this rich chapter.

How happy are those ...who live according to the LORD's instruction! Happy are those who keep His decrees and seek Him with all their heart (vv. 1-2).

Here is a simple motivation for understanding the need to study this manual. It is the clear expectation that those of us who operate within His creation will "keep His decrees and seek Him with all their heart".

LORD, ... teach me Your statutes. ... I rejoice in the way revealed by Your decrees as much as in all riches (vv. 12-14).

This makes clear the heart attitude necessary in approaching this instruction manual. We should treasure God's instructions as our greatest riches. We should view this instruction manual as our most-prized possession!

Open my eyes so that I may contemplate wonderful things from Your instruction. I am a stranger on earth; do not hide Your commands from me (vv. 18-19).

This acknowledges that we do not have the wisdom within ourselves to operate within our Lord's creation and that we need guidance that can only come from God. I do not believe anyone responsible for affairs of state can feel secure in one's own wisdom. Hence, this argues that this chapter and the manual it refers to – the Bible – is essential for the one desiring to be a statesman.

You rebuke [those] who wander from Your commands (v. 21).

This expresses a clear recognition of the need to live within the guidelines of this manual. It also warns that our Creator cares so much that we operate within the intended

guidelines that He will correct us when we are tempted to operate outside those guidelines. This also makes clear that God loves His creation and cares about its well-being so much that He will correct us when we do not adhere to His instructions. We must view the Bible as our Father's instruction book to His children whom He loves very much. This also alerts us of the damage that our errors will inflict upon those for whom we have stewardship.

Your decrees are my delight and my counselors (v. 24).

This speaks of the inner joy that results when we are committed to implementing our Lord's instructions. This addresses the quality of life our Lord intends for our lives and the means of experiencing it – obedience to His instructions. This also implies His care for us when we allow ourselves to operate as His instruments.

Give me life through Your word (v. 25).

This continues to emphasize the quality of life God intends when we operate within His guidelines. The life that is described is one of joy and satisfaction, not drudgery or regret.

Teach me Your statutes (v. 26).

Help me understand the meaning of Your precepts (v. 27).

This is an appeal to God for help in understanding His instructions. This makes the amazing recognition that God not only reveals His instructions to us, but He gladly helps us understand them.

Keep me from the way of deceit and graciously give me Your instruction. I have chosen the way of truth; I have set Your ordinances before me. I cling to Your decrees; ... I pursue the way of Your commands, for You broaden my understanding (vv. 29-32).

This acknowledges the need for God's instructions and the commitment to understanding and obeying. It appeals to God for His help in adhering to the instructions. It furthermore recognizes that there are deceitful voices tempting us to doubt the truth of God's instructions, which we must recognize and not give in to.

Listen to the heart attitude that follows:

Teach me, LORD, the meaning of Your statutes, and I will always keep them. Help me understand Your instruction, and I will obey it and follow it with all my heart. Help me stay on the path of Your commands, for I take pleasure in it. Turn my heart to Your decrees and not to material gain. Turn my eyes from looking at what is worthless; give me life in Your ways. Confirm what You said to Your servant, for it produces reverence for You (vv. 33-38).

This expresses the heart desire to understand and a commitment to obeying once I understand. This makes clear the principle that God makes Himself known to those committed to obeying that revelation to them.

APPLICATION TO THE STATESMAN. Do I understand the Bible as the instruction manual of God, the Designer and Creator, to mankind? Do I understand myself as a human implementer on behalf of an unseen God in caring for His creation? Am I willing to study His instruction manual to apply His instructions in my responsibilities?