

TRUTH TALK

A PUBLICATION OF THE WORD FOR LIFE
Helping you live a God-centered, truth-driven life
August/September 2009



Our Heart's True Desire
Is Temptation Sin?
TWFL Station Log

Truth Talk Truth Talk

Psalm 119 – The Word for Life!

Our Heart's True Desire

Stanza 13 – Verses 97-104 – **Part 1**

Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.

You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; for they are ever with me.

I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation.

I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Your precepts.

I have restrained my feet from every evil way, that I may keep Your word.

I have not departed from Your judgments, for You Yourself have taught me.

How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

Through Your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.

Cover Photo: Lake Superior Sunrise – Dick Melzer, Photographer

In the two previous stanzas, the psalmist opened a window allowing us to peer into his soul as he walked a dark and difficult portion of the path. With painful honesty, he articulated how he felt as he languished in the house of affliction where God fed him the bread of sorrow. Sooner or later all pilgrims who choose to walk the Way of the Word will join him at this table. And when we do, we will desperately seek the same comfort that sustained him. We will look to the same source for deliverance. God's words provided both comfort as well as deliverance to the psalmist and will do so for all pilgrims who follow his example and cultivate his commitment to that Word in all of their ways for all of their days.

Interestingly, most Christians would confidently assert the same claim the psalmist makes to love God's law in the opening verse of the stanza! Many believers confidently assert their undying adora-

tion of God's Word without considering that they may be asked to confirm that claim. Many who claim to love the Bible more than life itself have scant evidence of their utter devotion. In some cases their evidence comes in the form of a misplaced loyalty to a particular version of God's Word, while their lives or ministries reflect almost no conformity to the demands contained therein.

Sometimes their love consists primarily of speaking and singing about God's Word in church, but there is no willingness to conform to the demands of Scripture throughout the rest of their lives. However, this was not the case with the psalmist. Nor can it be the case with any pilgrim who desires to experience the stability in suffering and affliction displayed by the psalmist throughout his spiritual journey. His bold assertion to love God's law rang true in the context of his daily life. It can and must ring true in ours.

I. His Confident Confession (v 97a)

Oh, how I love Your law!

The psalmist begins this stanza by proclaiming his love for God’s law in unmistakable, passionate terms that spring from the depth of his heart. Interestingly, this passionate love for God’s law is equally sweet to his soul (v. 103). So passionate is his confession of this love for God’s law that it is the sole focus of the stanza. There are no petitions to the Lord, no mention of afflictions, and no trace of the depressed emotional state that permeated the previous two stanzas. Instead, there is a cry of joyful affirmation expressing pure, unadulterated love for God’s law. However, this is neither the first or only time the psalmist declares his love for God’s Word. He affirms his love for God’s commandments in verses 47, 48, and 127. He proclaims his love for God’s statutes or testimonies in verse 119. He loves God’s pre-

**Clearly,
he has come to love
the Word of God,
and this love
becomes
a dominant theme
throughout
his pilgrimage.**

cepts in verse 159. Here he loves God’s instruction or “torah”. He reiterates this love for God’s law in verses 113 and 163. Clearly, he has come to love the Word of God, and this love becomes a dominant theme throughout his pilgrimage.

Not only does this stanza proclaim his love for God’s law, it also contains information that helps to further clarify the nature of his claim. What exactly is the nature

of his love for God’s Word? Often the term “love” directs attention to one’s affinity for something or someone. However, the particular term employed by the psalmist actually focuses on a different component of

love than affinity or affection. The term is used often in the Old Testament in contexts where obedience is mentioned as an expected traveling companion to this word. It has reference to commitment to something or someone that displays itself in appropriate actions and responses. For exam-

ple, in Exodus 20:6, God stated that He would show loving kindness to those who love Him and keep His commandments. In Deuteronomy 10:13-13, Moses reminded Israel that God's requirements of them were not burdensome nor numerous. Rather, they were to fear the Lord, walk in His ways, love Him, serve Him with all their heart and soul, and keep His commandments and statutes.

So, when the psalmist proclaims his love for God's Word, he is not merely articulating a fond affection for God's instruction. He is expressing his personal commitment to living them out in his walk by conforming his life to that instruction. The object of his committed love is none other than the "torah" of God – God's revealed will for the life of His servant.

This claim is no small matter for the psalmist. Loving God means loving His Word, and no one loves God's Word who does not

consistently attempt to conform to its demands. There are many who are quick to affirm a love for God's Word whose life betrays the truth – they have no real commitment to that Word. They may have a fond affection for it as long as it does not intrude into their life or make uncomfortable demands upon them. In some cases they may even make bold affirmations about the Word of God that sound impressive in the Sanctuary and among the congregation of the righteous. However, upon encountering that individual in the way of life outside of the Sanctuary, his claim to love God's law vanishes like misty breath on a cold morning. However, there is sure evidence to back up the claim of a man who boldly asserts his love for God's Word.

II. His Confirmatory Evidence (vv. 97b, 98b, 99b)

. . . it is my meditation all the day.

Is there any defining biblical evidence confirming someone's claim to love God's law? How can a claim like this truly be evaluated? This stanza affirms such evidence exists and provides an accurate revelation of what comprises such evidence. The evidence includes experiencing the benefits of such a love for God's law in personal life. It includes the consistent application of God's instruction or "torah" to the practices and habits of life. It is displayed in spiritual responses that are defined and set by God's Word to the circumstances of life. All of these are important confirmatory evidences that support a man's claim to truly love the Word of God. However, there is one primary piece of evidence without which none of the other pieces are possible. And it is precisely this piece of evidence that the psalmist presents from his life as the starting place for establishing the veracity of his

Meditation implies more than careful thought about God's Word; it implies an objective for such thought – the intentional application of the conclusions of biblical meditation to one's life and practice.

claim to love God's Word. This first and primary evidence is his constant practice of meditating on God's Word.

What exactly does the psalmist mean when he states that God's Law is his meditation all the day? Meditation in this stanza (and in the Scriptures in general) implies more than just quiet contemplation. Meditation is not passive. It

is an active musing or thoughtful contemplation of all or a portion of God's Word. Meditation implies more than careful thought about God's Word; it implies an objective for such thought – the intentional application of the conclusions of biblical meditation to one's life and practice. This is what David referred to in Psalm 1 when he talked about

the "blessed man" who meditates on the Law of God day and night (Psalm 1:2). It is evident from the rest of the verses in Psalm 1 that this man is doing his meditating in the midst of the activity of life ra-

ther than locked away in seclusion from all of the activity of life. His meditation causes him to reject specific counsel he receives from certain kinds of people. Meditating on God's Law caused him to avoid the walk or life practices of certain individuals. His constant meditation on God's Word helped him to recognize and reject the values and mindset of those who reject God's authority and refuse His instruction.

This is, in essence, the practice of our pilgrim. He meditates or concentrates on God's Laws constantly, to the point that he can say, "they are always with me!" (v. 98).

But while this may have always been his desire, he gives evidence in the psalm that this practice may have developed progressively in his life. He has spoken of his commitment to meditate on God's Word on several occasions earlier in the psalm. For instance, he mentions his intention to meditate on God's precepts in verse 15 of

**He meditates
or concentrates
on God's Laws
constantly,
to the point
that he can say,
"they are always with
me!"**

the second stanza. In the second stanza, we find that he is actually doing so when faced by opposition (v. 23). He promises to meditate on God's wonders in the third stanza, if God will help him to understand the pathway described in God's precepts (v. 27). If God will send lovingkindness to the psalmist, he promises to meditate on God's statutes (v. 48). He observes the practice of the wicked

and determines to respond by meditating on God's precepts (v. 78). At this point in his journey, he has come to understand the importance of meditation and has full intention to do so in his life – but it is still an intention. We find him actually doing some

meditating in verse 27, but for the most part, during the first stages of his pilgrimage, meditation, though certainly valued, remains his aspiration and intention.

However, by the time we meet our pilgrim in this stanza, meditation has gone beyond aspired intention to firm and committed practice. He is actually doing what in pre-

vious stanzas may have been his good intention. Now it is his constant practice. God's words are with him all the time (v. 98).

They are his constant meditation (v. 99). This practice remains his throughout the remaining stanzas of the psalm and actually becomes sweeter. For instance, in verse 148 the psalmist expresses his longing for night to fall that he might have quiet, uninterrupted time to contemplate and consider God's Word without the interruptions and distractions of life during the day!

Clearly, our pilgrim has progressed in his ability and desire to meditate on God's Word. And so can we.

Meditation is a primary evidence of deep devotion to God and to His Word. As believers, we instinctively know this to be true, and we initially aspire to make this practice a consistent reality in our lives. And so we set off like

the psalmist did in the second stanza to meditate on God's Word by reading it carefully and regularly. Obviously, this is where biblical meditation starts. Without regular, careful reading of

God's Word, meditation becomes an exercise in subjective frivolity. Meditation implies careful, considered, contemplation on the precise statements that God has given, which requires that we know and understand those statements. So meditation begins with regular and careful reading of Scripture.

...the psalmist expresses his longings for night to fall that he might have quiet, uninterrupted time to contemplate and consider God's Word without the interruptions and distractions of life during the day!

However, for meditation to become a constant activity in our lives, we must cultivate the ability to carry God's Word with us wherever we go. We must develop the ability to recall the relevant portions of God's Word precisely when we face particular circumstances and situations that often arise unexpectedly in life.

Conclusion:

Interestingly, it appears from the psalmist's journey that it was the unexpected, unforeseen circumstances of opposition, affliction, or personal failure that drove the psalmist to the Scripture to discover and retain the guidance and instruction contained therein for such circumstances in life. In other words, we don't become good at meditation through our good intentions. We become good at meditation when the storms of life force us to the Word for survival. We don't become good "meditators" to impress God or others, but rather to survive life! Find a man who meditates deeply on the Word of God and whose words and ways are shaped by that Word, and you will find a man who bears the scars of affliction, suffering, and trial in the way. In the house of suffering, God teaches us He is our relief. At the table of affliction and sor-

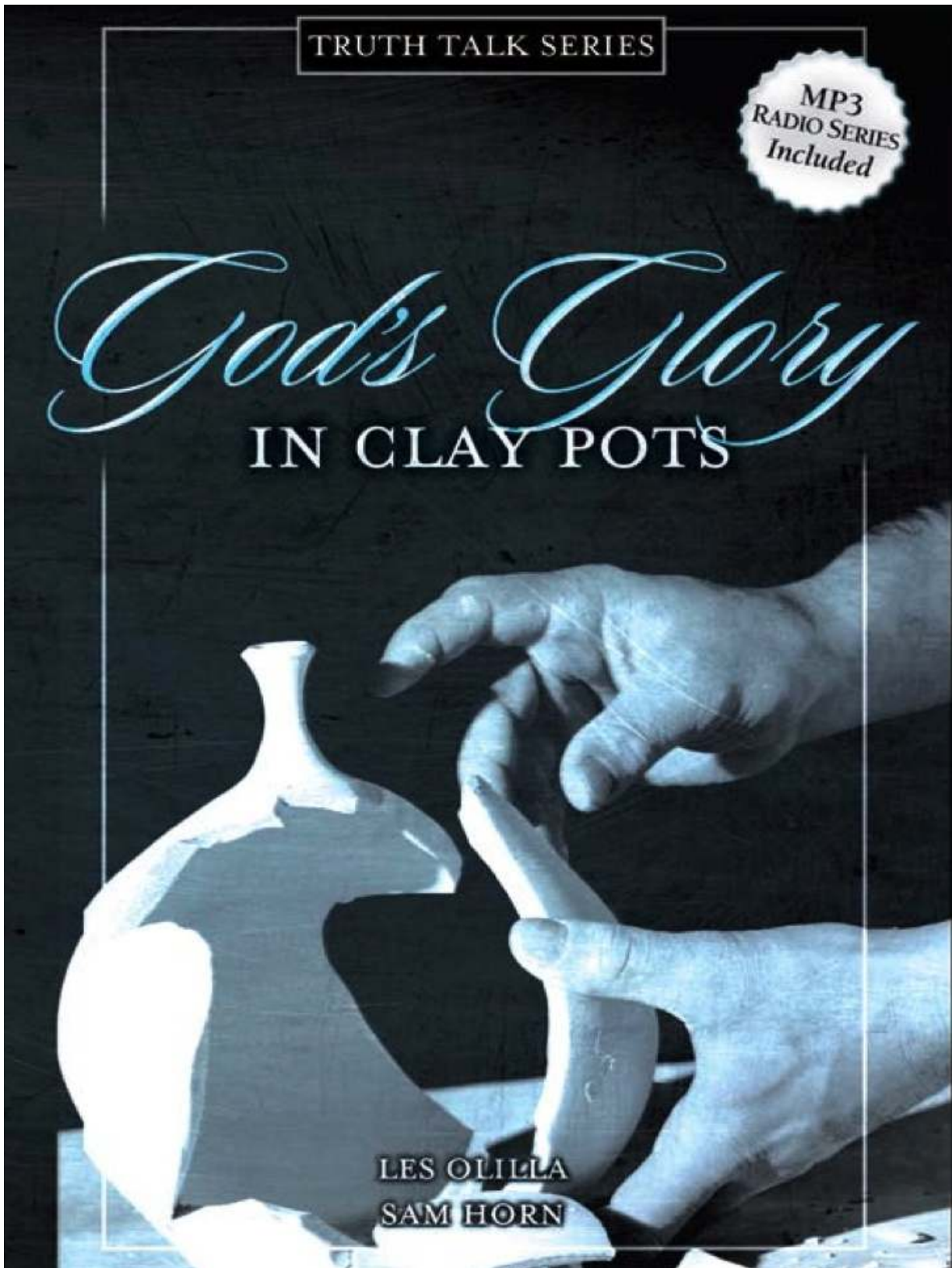
row, we learn that God is our comfort. As we face opposition from our closest fellows, God reminds us that He is our friend and defender. Even with our face pressed hard into the dust of personal failure, we discover God is our health and deliverance. When we face a fork in the path, God's Word gives accurate and reliable guidance.

Unfortunately, in the early portion of the journey, we tend to learn this last lesson by taking wrong forks and having to come back to God's Word for guidance back to the right path. However, as we continue to come back to God's Word for help, as the reading of it becomes our committed, daily practice, and as we insist on an exact obedience to it in our own lives, in time we will find ourselves saying with the psalmist, "Oh how I love Your Law! It is my meditation all the day!"



Dr. Sam Horn is the featured teacher and Host of The Word For Life, Senior Pastor of Brookside Baptist Church in Brookfield, Wisconsin, and Vice President of Ministerial Training at Northland International University in Dunbar, Wisconsin.

NEW BOOK RELEASE!



Why does
God allow
His
children
to
suffer?

Why do we sometimes suffer?

This is a great question – one for which there are dozens of possible answers, ranging from “to chasten or punish us” to “we won’t know until we get to heaven.”

But there is one reason so important that it is a recurrent theme in Scripture: that the works of God should be revealed in us.

One of the most irresistible and unforgettable ways that this truth is presented in Scripture is via the metaphor of clay pots. Join Drs. Les Ollila and Sam Horn as they unpack this metaphor and, in the process, help us gain new insight into the reason we are here and why we may sometimes suffer.

God’s Glory in Clay Pots is the first book in our Truth Talk Series and includes an audio MP3 disc of the six original Radio Series discussions between Dr. Les Ollila and Pastor Sam Horn which were the inspiration for this new book. Order your copy today – \$12.00!

*Join Pastor Sam Horn (SH) and Dr. Les Ollila (LO)
for a discussion that originally aired on
THE WORD FOR LIFE.*

SH: Well, Doc, we're here again this morning with the next installment of our program, "The Word For Life," and it's been an exciting study so far. We've been talking about life and what is it. James has been telling us that our life is a vapor, and you've helped us understand that in some unique ways. One of the exciting things has been your guiding us through the life of Joseph, a man who lived his dreams. The last time we were together, you talked to us a little bit about "conviction before crisis" being a necessary part of developing a life that can fulfill the dream that God has given it. You had an interesting analysis of Joseph's ability to stand because he had developed a holy fear of God and a fervent love for the Lord. And while you were talking

about that, I had a question which I would like to use to begin the broadcast today. In talking about Joseph and all of the things that happened to him, it's very obvious that he didn't go looking for these temptations. These temptations waylaid him, if you will, along the road of life. I've asked this question in my own heart, and as a pastor, I've dealt with this in counseling. Many times a person will come and say, "Is it wrong to be tempted? Have I somehow sinned in being tempted? Why does temptation come my way?" And I wonder if you could begin our time together by addressing that question.

LO: It's not a sin to be tempted. I illustrate it with teenagers this way. I say that it's not your fault

if a bird flies over your head, but it is your fault if the bird lands in your hair and builds a nest. We cannot control the bombardments of our senses, but it is up to us what we let inside. I always picture a choice filter. In other words, say that I am bombarded...I have on one side the inner man with bombardments coming from one side, and then I have a little box I call a choice filter. I have to choose what I am going to let into my inner man. Yielding to temptation is sin because I let into my inner man that which would take me away from total love for God. Instead of rejecting it, I let it in because it will serve me well for my purpose.

SH: You know, that image of a choice filter is powerful, because that really is what happens. Many of our listeners today are going to encounter temptation that they didn't plan on. They may get to their job, and all of a sudden one of their peers is going to do or say something that is go-

ing to trigger a temptation. Or they may end up at a computer somewhere and all of a sudden there's a temptation that comes. It could be as simple as driving down the highway and looking at a billboard sign, and all of a sudden there's a temptation that comes into their life. And so you're saying there is a choice filter that needs to be built into our lives. Can you talk a little bit about the choice filter that Joseph built into his life?

LO: Remember when computers first came out there was the often-repeated saying, "garbage in, garbage out." If I want the right output, I have to choose the right input. I am free to choose, but I am not free to determine the consequences of that choice. And so, I have to determine what I am going to let into my life.

Once I have made the choice, it's programmed in. I cannot choose the consequences. I have to live with the consequences of that choice.

SH: That's powerful. I'm free to choose, but I'm not free to choose the consequences of my choice.

LO: Right. I'm free to choose. I'm created with a will. But I'm not free to determine the consequences of that choice. Once I have made the choice, it's programmed in. I cannot choose the consequences. I have to live with the consequences of that choice.

That is something that has to be kept in mind. What will this choice do? Where will it lead?

SH: And that's why the Word of God is so oftentimes set, particularly in Proverbs, to help us understand the importance of making right choices.

LO: Right. We see that pattern in Joseph's life. No, it's not a sin to be tempted, but the sin comes when we let into our life what kills our love for God.

SH: If we've been meditating on the Word, and if we've been reflecting on the works of God, and if we are maintaining a lifelong everyday pattern of worship, it

will be a lot easier to make the right choices. Because the wrong choices are going to run right into those three values that you gave us. Sometimes we think of worship as something we do on Sundays. But really, our listeners could be worshiping right now as they listen.

LO: Exactly.

SH: And they should be. Because if they aren't, when those temptations come, there will not be that filter. They're going to struggle, because that filter is going to be gone, and it's just going to go right into

life. What was the other thing that Joseph did? I know there was a third thing you were going to tell us about Joseph in terms of what he did. He had a holy fear for the Lord. What else did he add to his life?

LO: When you were glancing at Genesis 39:9 while I was speaking in the last broadcast, you said Joseph brushed over the fact of the

If we've been meditating on the Word, and if we've been reflecting on the works of God, and if we are maintaining a lifelong everyday pattern of worship, it will be a lot easier to make the right choices.

husband, but that is the third point that I had. Joseph had a committed loyalty to authority over him because it says, "...neither is there any in this house that he hath kept back from me except you." In other words, "He has very clearly instructed me that I may not have you." He may have noted when he saw how good looking Joseph was that he was going to have a problem with his wife. And so he may have been prepping Joseph that when she comes down, that's a no no. I don't know that, I'm just reading into that. But looking at that potential, the husband may have sensed that it may have been a problem.

SH: You know that's interesting, because afterwards the normal penalty would have been execution. The husband, we believe historically, was the head executioner for Pharaoh. He would easily have the opportunity and the ability to do this, so there may be more than just idle speculation to what you're saying. The fact that he didn't call for the headsman to come and take Joseph's head off might indicate that he really un-

derstood the woman he was married to had a roving eye.

LO: It's possible. And he knew Joseph's character well enough that he had to put him in prison for a while, maybe from just pressure, but God had another lesson for Joseph there in prison. Loyalty, to me, is a great protector. People may not be faced with the big temptations of lust or pornography or dishonesty, but they may be strongly faced with the temptation of disloyalty.

SH: What do you mean by disloyalty?

LO: Choosing not to align myself under the person who is over me. It starts with God and then it continues with everyone else in that flowchart. If I am under someone in that flowchart and I become disloyal...it comes out of discontent. And the fact that Joseph was not disloyal indicated that he was very contented in his relationship with God. And that is great protection. A discontented person is setting himself up for a lot of different problems. He's setting himself up for a lot of sin that

would not be there. If you look in Numbers 16 at Korah, when you see he started out as a discontented soloist and ended up with a 250 voice choir. They were all quality people. They were princes, they were quarrelsome, they were taking on authority, and they ended up in a very negative situation. And they turned out to be a quantity people...250 people. But what was the problem? They took on visible authority.

Moses took on the anointed Aaron and then later in the chapter took on the Almighty Himself.

SH: And you never win when you take on God.

LO: No. Because when he came in, one more member added to the choir and sang bass, and the earth split and then bingo, there goes the whole troupe down in the earth. It was God's statement. He said, "I will tell you who is in charge." Now you take that to a practical level. I go to my workplace and if I am not the boss, I have to put

myself under someone. There are avenues of appeal that I can go through, but I cannot let discontent become manifested from me to other employees and eventually get word to my employer.

The fact that Joseph was not disloyal indicated that he was very contented in his relationship with God...that is great protection.

SH: What is the root that makes us discontent, Doc? Why are we like that as God's people? God has given us so much, and we have all the riches of Christ. So why do I struggle as I drive to work with

contentedness?

LO: It's comparison. I would never be discontented if I never saw anything that anybody else had. When we see Korah and the solution that Moses brought to Korah from his discontent and his disloyalty, he said, "Are you not satisfied with the service of the house of the Lord? Do you seek the priesthood also?" In other words, "You're not content in your placement that God has for you." And what was he doing? Comparing what Moses had. Comparing what Aaron had. Dis-

contentment is rooted in the fact that we compare.

SH: Coming back to Joseph with this whole idea...what's so amazing is that he's content. In the midst of horrific

events...everything that he planned wasn't happening.

In his mind, God told him that he was going to do certain things, people were going to bow, and here he is in prison because he did the right thing. And yet, behind all of this is

contentment. Can you kind of wrap up the life of Joseph for us? Tell us how he got there.

LO: If I could sum it up in one word, it would be trust. I trust God. That is, if I start getting a hint in my spirit that God is not trustable, that God blew it in my case, then I have already started the seeds of discontent in my soul, and then I really compare to what others have. I go to church...I sit and I see happy families, and I see happy children, and maybe I'm

having a problem with my child, or maybe my wife just left. I think it's all in the word trust. I trust God. Toward the end of Job, it says, "...and Job worshiped." Job was saying, "God I trust you."

The difference between the way Joseph's life turned out for God and the way others sometimes turn out is this whole concept of trusting God. And at the heart of trust is belief.

SH: And that really does summarize the whole idea that James is painting when he says, "life is a vapor." The difference between the way Joseph's life turned out for God and the way others sometimes turn out is this whole concept of trusting God.

And at the heart of trust is belief. Do you believe that God will actually do what He said He would do? And that's so true in my life. You know, when I get in trouble, when I take this vapor and I waste a few portions of it on sin or on some other perspective, it's typically because I don't believe that God really....like you're saying...is going to come through. I think I'm going to have to do it myself, or I don't believe God really meant what He said when He talked about a certain sin pat-

tern and I choose that route.
That's a powerful thought. The trust factor.

LO: Yes. So to review...Joseph had conviction before he faced the crisis, he had a fervent love for God, and a holy fear of God, and he was loyal.

SH: Trust is to be the key. Conviction before the crisis is based on the fact that God is trustable. Joseph learned that from a child

on. This study on the life of Joseph has flown by. Thank you for helping us with this, Doc, and we're looking forward to more as we come back next time. I think the time that we come together again, we'll look at the life of a man who also had a dream, but unlike Joseph, he didn't trust the Lord and he blew his dream. We'll be looking at the life of Lot. We're excited about what the Lord will do through that study in us.



Dr. Sam Horn, Host of The Word For Life, and the Senior Pastor of Brookside Baptist Church in Brookfield, Wisconsin.



Dr. Les Ollila, Co-host of The Word For Life, and the Chancellor of Northland International University in Dunbar, Wisconsin.



24 / 7 Conservative Christian Music www.abidingradio.com

Visit us at www.abidingradio.com to listen to a constant stream of God-honoring music. It is free! You can also select an all-instrumental channel in addition to our main vocal / instrumental stream.

RADIO STATION LOG

COLORADO

- Grand Junction - KCIC 88.5 FM
 - Monday-Friday 7:30 PM

MINNESOTA

- Minneapolis - WCTS 1030 AM
 - Sunday 2:30 PM
 - Monday-Friday 4:07 PM

NORTH CAROLINA

- Charlotte - WZRH 960 AM
 - Sunday 2:00 PM
- Raleigh Durham - WDRU 1030 AM
 - Sunday 2:00 PM
- Winston Salem- WTRU 830 AM
 - Sunday 2:00 PM

OHIO

- Lima - WCBV 105.9 FM
 - Monday-Friday 3:00 PM

TEXAS

- McAllen - KCAS 91.5 FM
 - Monday - Friday 7:30 AM

UTAH

- Salt Lake City - KUTR 820 AM
 - Sunday 2:00 PM

WISCONSIN

- Milwaukee - WVCY 107.7 FM
- Sheboygan - WVCY 94.9 FM
 - Sunday 9:30 AM
 - Mon/Wed/Fri 6:15 AM

AFRICA


- Kitwe, Zambia - Faith FM
 - Coming Soon!

CARIBBEAN

- Grenada - 94.5 FM/1400 AM
 - Monday-Friday 6:45 AM
- Antigua - CRL 1160 AM
 - Thurs-Sat 6:45 AM

PACIFIC

- Guam - KHMG 88.1 FM
 - Sat. 5 PM / Sun. 2 PM
 - Mon/Wed/Fri 5:00 AM, 9:45 AM, & 7:15 PM



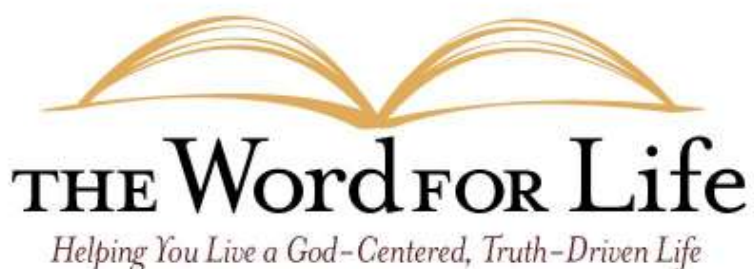
THE Word FOR Life

Helping You Live a God-Centered, Truth-Driven Life

We are so thankful for those of you who have made it part of your lives to join us for The Word for Life radio broadcasts. We invite you to go to our website, www.thewordforlife.org, where you can download past daily and weekend broadcasts. Our desire is to continue to spread the Word of God to a needy world, helping folks live a God-centered, truth-driven life.

Following is a testimony from one of our listeners:

Dr. O. and Brother Sam, thanks for the fellowship around the Word...my own cup of coffee tastes so much better as I sit and listen early in the morning with you. Thanks for the fellowship, exhortation, encouragement, and excitement to live for our Lord Jesus Christ! Psalm 73:28, "But it is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all thy works." ~ John



The Word for Life Magazine
4470 Pilgrim Rd.
Brookfield, WI 53005
866-551-TWFL
info@thewordforlife.org
www.thewordforlife.org