

Ps 119:131 I opened my mouth wide and panted, for I longed for Thy commandments.

This is a pretty descriptive set of words. It paints a picture for us of the great desire the Psalmist has for Truth. You might even want to start at the beginning of Psalm 119 and mark each time God's word is mentioned. There are several references used for the word: law, way, testimonies, commandments, precepts, word, judgments, statutes, saying.

opened <pa'ar> to yawn, open wide

mouth <peh> can also mean mind, speech

panted <sha'aph> to inhale eagerly; desire earnestly, devour

Let's remember the writer of these words. David endures imprisonment, accusation and persecution because of his love for God. Throughout this entire Psalm, the love he has for God's word dominates. He recognizes his need at all times of his life, whether he is in adversity or prosperity. In all circumstances, the Psalmist calls upon the word of God for his sustaining comfort and encouragement.

"I opened my mouth wide and panted" is something we can readily picture. The words to inhale eagerly, desire earnestly, and devour are indicative of serious need and want. Think of a newborn baby who has slept for six hours (probably 3-4 is a more realistic time ☺) then wakes with an insatiable hunger for its mother's milk. It is impossible to appease the infant with anything but what is desired. There is nothing else that will fill its need!

Think of a puppy inhaling its food. It seems as though it just can't get enough and the only thing on its mind is to eat. One of our dogs, Lily, is a French Bull Dog. As sweet as she is, she is not at all loyal to any one person, rather, the hand that fills her dish becomes her temporary attachment. Food is her obsession. It is evident in the noisy way she eats - I've often thought we should have named her piglet - and with the gusto she uses to inhale her food. When she was a puppy, we would have to put a rock in the center of her bowl in order to slow down her gulping the contents.

*David explains his words to us: "for I longed for thy commandments". His desire for God's truth is strong. Think of the word yearning. I love this word used in connection with God's word because it describes a **prolonged** desire or need, **a need that is never completely filled**. Let me explain: We can never get enough of the Truth. There is always more. More insight, more encouragement, more instruction, more conviction, more knowledge of God's love for us and how unfathomable it is! Heaven forbid we ever get to the place where we think we are finished studying God's truths or have it all together or don't need more input. The Bible is*

not a course we take and complete, it is a life-giving, life-sustaining gift from the very mouth of God. It is to be treasured, pondered over, and used frequently. It is quite different than any other book we might have.

Textbooks are used for a time, learned, memorized, spit out on a test and forgotten. They also frequently become outdated as new versions are published. Cookbooks may be used frequently but most of us use them for quick reference then put them away. We don't ponder what they mean or how a recipe can change our life! Storybooks or novels, depending on age, are read for amusement, for recreation. **The Bible is always relevant, not meant to be forgotten and shelved, and hopefully referenced so often that it is always handy. It is meant for us to ponder and it absolutely changes lives as God opens desiring hearts to know His truths.**

How strong is your desire to know God? Can you affirm with the Psalmist his words, "I opened my mouth wide and panted, for I longed for Thy commandments"?

Take a moment and picture these words we've been given...

Ps 42:1-2 As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for Thee, O God. 2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?

Ps 63:1 (A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah.) O God, Thou art my God; I shall seek Thee earnestly; my soul thirsts for Thee, my flesh yearns for Thee, in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

Just a quick observation of the above verse. The Psalmist understands that nothing available to him on the earth will suffice his need. Only God has the means to refresh him. Trying to find fulfillment in the world is like stringing yourself along with crumbs, temporary satisfaction until you find the next morsel. God alone can fill His children's needs and keep them completely quenched.

Ps 84:2 My soul longed and even yearned for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.

Ps 119:20 My soul is crushed with longing after Thine ordinances at all times.

One of the commentaries I read used the word zeal to describe the affection David had for God's commands. To be zealous for something is to have a feeling of strong eagerness towards it; excessive fervor, prompt willingness. **MAY WE BE ACCUSED AND FOUND GUILTY OF OUR EXCESSIVE LOVE FOR GOD!**

Consider. Do you drink to your fill in God's word, does it encompass every area of your life, or do you just sample and taste here and there when things heat up or become difficult or encouragement is needed? Do you

starve yourself between Sunday services and scheduled Bible studies? Are you in the word like a glutton on Sunday and perhaps Wednesday and Thursday but not really throughout the week?

Many of us have that one favorite food that is difficult to pass up. For some, it may be a salty potato chip or buttery popcorn, for others it may be a form of chocolate, or perhaps peanuts – you know, the ballpark kind. If you eat just one, you desire more. It invokes a craving that can't be satisfied. But, alas, hopefully you use restraint and limit yourself to a reasonable serving.

With God's word there is no suggested portion size. Go ahead and feast on His truth. Let Him grow your appetite to know Him. Be a glutton! As you taste what He has for you, your desire will grow for more. It's true! Spurgeon says, "When the word really enters the soul, it creates a strong desire for more holiness".

IN GOD ALONE HIS CHILDREN FIND TRUE AND LASTING CONTENTMENT.

Ps 81:10 "I, the LORD, am your God, Who brought you up from the land of Egypt; open your mouth wide and I will fill it.

Visit the word panted again. WordWeb defines its meaning as, 1. to breathe noisily, as when one is exhausted, 2. to utter while panting, as if out of breath, and 3. to desire strongly or persistently.

I picture gasping for air like when you're in a higher altitude and walking around. You feel like you simply cannot get enough. Or diving to the bottom of a deep pool and coming up for breath – you can barely suck enough air into your lungs. If you have asthma, you know the feeling quite well. It's this type of need David is speaking of in Psalm 119:131.

What do you desire most in your life right now? You can answer this question by taking an inventory of where your time, thoughts, energy and resources are put. I can remember being a single Mom with three very young children. This was not in my plan but it was in God's. I wanted so badly to meet someone. I missed the companionship of a husband and I was often overwhelmed with raising three children by myself. My desire was for a man to come into our lives and 'save' us. As a new believer, my desire was sorely misplaced. Thankfully, because of God's grace in my life and others, an older, wiser woman gently set me on the better path of desiring God first and foremost. I will never be able to thank Cindy enough for challenging me to concentrate on God by striving to emulate the hearts of the godly women He put forth in His word. Her reasoning was so insightful: she said, "It is that kind of woman, a woman who has devoted her heart and desires to God more than anything else, that will attract a godly man". Recalling this conversation literally brings tears of joy and gratitude to my eyes. I learned to long for God's commandments more

than anything else in life. You know what's cool about this? God answered my prayer to know Him and He has continued to grow my desire for Him ever since. What a loving, gracious, amazing God we have!

What are God's commandments mentioned in the verse we are looking at? His laws, His ordinances, His precepts. His written word given to us through the saints following Him thousands of years ago. I bet they panted to know and understand God as they were instructed to pen His words.

Ps 119:20 My soul is crushed with longing after Thine ordinances at all times.

Joh 7:37 Now on the last day, the great [day] of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.

Joh 4:14 but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."

Deeply inhale God' s word, take pleasure in it, and develop an insatiable appetite to know Him. Your life will be transformed.