



A LIGHT TO MY PATH

WHEN HIS FAITHFULNESS HURTS

PSALM 119:65-80

MAIN IDEA

While discipline can hurt, it is easier to deal with when you know it is done out of the great love the Lord has for us.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

How many people do you really trust? Who in your life is welcome to give you coaching or criticism about something you say or do? Trust is not always easy to come by and having relationships you can fully rely on is a valuable commodity. Think about the connection between trusting someone and receiving discipline or chastisement from them.

- **If someone calls you out for something or coaches you up on a situation without being in relationship with you, how do you handle that?**
- **What needs to be present for you to receive discipline or chastisement from another person?**

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> Have someone in your group read Psalm 119:65-70.

The psalmist acknowledged that God had dealt well with him according to His Word. This is crucial to know and understand because God literally cannot act contrary to Scripture. He is always just, and He is always reliable. You can count on God to deal with you and handle everything in your life in the best way, even if it gets tough sometimes.

As a beloved child of God, any of us may find ourselves in need of discipline from the Lord to refine us and shape us into fully devoted followers of Christ. But just as a child of yours receives your discipline when they misbehave, we also must trust the Lord and receive His discipline.

When a parent disciplines a child, it is done out of love so that they will learn how to act and speak appropriately as they mature. When the Lord disciplines you, He does so out of love for you. He acts according to His Word, and He is our Good Father who knows what is best for us in all things.

- **When was the last time you felt as if the Lord was disciplining you? What types of things does He discipline His children over?**
- **What makes it hard for you to receive discipline from the Lord?**
- **What does “going astray” have to do with being “afflicted” as the psalmist wrote in verse 67?**
- **How would you say love and discipline work together for your good?**

> Have someone in your group read Psalm 119:71-74.

The psalmist continued his comments and observations on the value of knowing God's Word and learning His statutes. This was while reflecting on what he learned from being disciplined by the Lord. Consider what all we can learn and apply from these verses about the role the Word of God has in our understanding godly discipline.

- **How does knowing or not knowing God's Word affect the way we receive discipline from the Lord?**

The writer compared knowing Scripture to gold and silver pieces. This is a great reminder to us that we should value God's Word in a correct manner. There are many other things that we place value on and often let take precedence over learning the truth found in Scripture. When you value the wrong things over God's Word, it will be evident in the way you respond to the Lord when He wants to shape and refine you.

The psalmist helped us see how to get this right. In verse 73, he named some specific things about God that are crucial in handling discipline that comes our way. He is our Creator. He fashioned us. That should make a huge difference in the way we respond when we feel like God is working on us somehow.

- **How can you assess what you value in life? What do you tend to place value on above learning the Word of God?**

- **Why is it wise and worthwhile to align your values with Scripture?**

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- **How does remembering that God created you affect the way you respond when He is working on you about something you need to change?**

> Have someone in your group read Psalm 119:75-80.

God has the right to do what He does as our Creator. The psalmist reiterated that it is out of love that God disciplines us. We know and understand this love from learning the Word.

- **What stands out to you most from this passage? Why?**

Look at the pattern used in verses 76-80. Through these verses, we are pointed back to the fact that God is our strength, and His Word sustains us in every situation.

When you find something that you struggle with in God's Word, you can go straight to God to find what you need to learn and apply it to your life. The writer asked God for some specific things to equip him to live in a way that honors God. Note that with most requests the psalmist offered a positive response. We should form the same habit of asking God for what we need and committing to being changed by His response. By doing this we are more and more aware of the love God has for us, even in times of discipline and difficulty.

- **Which of these requests do you most resonate with? Why?**
 - **Why do you think each request is followed by a response?**
 - **Why is it important to declare the changes you intend to make as God is at work?**
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APPLICATION

Offer the following action steps for the application of God's Word.

- **Write out a prayer of confession and repentance of the recent times that you have resisted and even complained about God's discipline. Turn it into a prayer of praise and thanksgiving that He loves you enough to care about disciplining you.**

- **Each day this week, pray for the opportunity to have a spiritual conversation with an individual who does not have a relationship with Christ.**

PRAY

Name the ways you need God to work in your life this week. Commit to apply His Word and seek to be changed by what you are asking for as the psalmist did in verses 76-80. Ask God for open eyes to see Him at work and discernment to know how and whom to share with about what you've been learning.

PSALM 119:65-80

119:65. NIV reads the verb ‘āśītā as though it were an imperative, but CSB and NASB read it properly as a perfect referring to the Lord’s past beneficence to the psalmist. As he reviews how the Lord has dealt with him in the past, he recognizes that the Lord has treated him well. What the Lord has done has lined up with what he has said, as he has been true to his promises.

Notes:

119:66. As in v. 64 and often in Psalm 119, the psalmist takes the position of a student in God’s school as he asks the Lord to teach him. Left to himself, the psalmist would default to folly and ignorance, so he asks the Lord to teach him good judgment and discernment. He relies on what the Lord commands him to give him direction for life.

119:67. Again the psalmist hints at the backstory that has prompted what he has written in Psalm 119. In v. 67 he refers to three general episodes in his life story. In the past he went astray, with the verb šgg likely speaking of inadvertent sin. He then was afflicted by God, a process that had led to his repentance and restoration (cf. the pattern described in Ps 32:3–5). The Lord used the pain of adversity to purge the psalmist of his waywardness, and he has now returned to keep the Lord’s word.

119:68. Reflecting on the Lord and on his word, perhaps in the light of his experience sketched in v. 67, the psalmist concludes that the Lord is good in both who he is and what he does. This is also an implicit admission that he himself is not good and that he needs to learn to be and to do good from the good God. So in words that repeat v. 64b, he asks the Lord to teach him his statutes.

119:69. The hostility of the arrogant people who have afflicted the psalmist creates a contrast to the Lord’s goodness. Using a graphic word picture, the

psalmist depicts the arrogant (cf. v. 51) as smearing him with lies (cf. Job 13:4), as plaster covers a wall. The psalmist, however, is not overcome by their evil or distracted from what is good. His value system is totally antithetical to theirs because while they lie, he wholeheartedly keeps God's precepts. Even as he experiences their injustices against him, he keeps his focus clearly on obeying the Lord.

Notes:

119:70. Continuing to speak of the arrogant (v. 69), he contrasts their hearts with his own. They are diseased, but he is robust and well. They are insensitive, not feeling or caring about (cf. Ps 17:10) what matters to God; but the psalmist delights in God's instruction (cf. v. 97).

119:71. From his assessment of his experience in v. 71, the psalmist has come to recognize the good effect that affliction has produced in his life. Apart from his affliction, he would have been ignorant of God's way; but his pain has prodded him to learn from God, for as Alter observes, "Suffering impels reflection, which in turn leads the sufferer to embrace God's teaching as the guide to turning his life around." His painful route through the school of hard knocks likely took a significant amount of time, but the psalmist has come to rejoice in the precious results in his life produced through adversity (cf. Jas 1:2–4).

119:72. In language that echoes what the book of Proverbs affirms about the preeminent value of wisdom (cf. Prov 3:14; 8:10; 16:16), the psalmist evaluates instruction from the Lord as better than much wealth (cf. v. 127; Ps 19:10). In view of these intertextual connections, the Lord is implicitly viewed here as the teacher of wisdom and the psalmist as the student who has chosen to value the words of the Lord his teacher above all the material riches craved by the world.

119:73. As the Lord originally formed the first human (Gen 2:7), so the psalmist asserts that the Lord's hands made and formed him (cf. Pss 138:8; 139:13–16; 143:5). He wants to learn from the one who fashioned him and who knows him completely, so he calls on the Lord to give him understanding that will enable him to learn what he has commanded. He needs understanding from God if he is to learn God's word.

Notes:

119:74. The psalmist realizes that the Lord is both working in him and through him. His individual life is a small but vital part in the Lord's larger plan, and he wants his life with its hope in God's word to encourage others who like him revere the Lord. He is confident that how he responds to the Lord will prompt others to praise the Lord as well.

119:75. Picking up his thought from v. 67, the psalmist affirms that the Lord did what was right when he afflicted him. He had gone astray before he was afflicted, so the Lord had responded to his sin in a manner that was righteous and faithful, as he stayed true to his character. What the Lord says and does flows out of who he is.

119:76. The untranslatable particle *nā'* indicates that in v. 76 the psalmist strongly entreats the Lord to comfort him. He does not make demands of the Lord, but rather he beseeches him as a servant to his master. Instead of trying to comfort himself or to turn to others for comfort, he seeks the faithful love of the Lord to comfort him (cf. v. 41). He calls on the Lord to be true to his promised commitment to him.

119:77. Again the psalmist appeals to the Lord's character, only this time to his *rahāmîm* ("compassion"). This rich term "signifies a warm compassion, a compassion which goes the second mile, which is ready to forgive sin, to replace judgment with grace." His life, which delights in the

Lord's instruction (cf. v. 97), is dependent on divine grace and mercy.

Notes:

119:78. Even as the psalmist addresses the Lord in vv. 73–77, he is keenly aware of the arrogant people who are perverting justice by slandering him with lies. As the arrogant focus on speaking falsehoods against him, the psalmist focuses his attention on meditating on God's truth. For the arrogant truth is dispensable, but for the psalmist it is indispensable because his life is shaped by God's word as he assimilates it through the process of meditation (cf. v. 48; Ps 1:2). The psalmist longs for the Lord to give to the arrogant the shame they have attempted to inflict on him (cf. Pss 71:24; 83:17; 86:17).

119:79. Because the psalmist feels alone in adversity, he longs for others who like him revere the Lord to come alongside him in his time of affliction (cf. v. 63, where the psalmist states that he is a friend of all who fear the Lord). This is fellowship built on shared commitment to the Lord and his word.

119:80. As he appeals to the Lord to sustain him in his time of need, the psalmist is not blind to his own weaknesses. Realizing that for humans the heart is the root of the problem (cf. Jer 17:9), he longs to have a blameless or united heart (cf. Ps 86:11) before God, not a divided heart that will lead to disobedience and disgrace. Godly living throughout the Bible begins in the heart and works out into transformed behavior; it is not a cosmetic makeover that tries to produce the appearance of godliness through actions that are not prompted by a heart devoted to the Lord.