



A LIGHT TO MY PATH
SWEETER THAN HONEY
PSALM 119:97-104

MAIN IDEA

All followers of Christ should recognize the value of loving the Word of God and commit to spending more time and effort to develop that love more fully.

INTRODUCTION

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

Think of your favorite sweet treat and share that with the group. Take a minute to try and convince the others that your choice is the overall “best” or tastiest.

There are different ways people develop a taste for something, but usually there are some commonalities: How it makes you feel. What it tastes like. The results you receive from it. Whatever drew us to our favorite things, one common trait is that we talk about what we are passionate about. When you love someone or something, you will talk about it and let people know. The same is true for us spiritually.

- **How did you develop a taste for your favorite treat?**

- **What are some things you want people to notice about your “tastes” or preferences?**

UNDERSTANDING

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

> Have someone in your group read
Psalm 119:97-100.

- **What are some of the benefits the psalmist listed of loving God’s laws and ways that stand out to you? Why?**
- **What is the connection between recognizing the benefits of something and the value you place on that thing?**

The psalmist began this section of Scripture by stating His love for the Word of God and then listed several benefits he experienced because of the Word. How many of us can say the same thing? It is possible that although we know we should love God’s Word and meditate on it throughout the day, our reality does not match this ideal? It is easy to allow the things of the world to consume our thoughts to the point that we meditate on all the wrong things above Scripture.

- **What do you think it means to meditate on something “all the day”?**
- **What is the problem with meditating on things other than God’s Word?**

We all have things that linger in our minds throughout the day—thoughts that hover around and infiltrate all the others. Allowing worldly things to consume our thoughts and minds

will not bring the same benefits mentioned in Psalm 119. Each of us must decide what will fill our minds. It is all too easy to open ourselves up to any number of things and meditate on those instead of Word of God.

- **What kinds of things tend to take over your thoughts instead of Scripture?**

- **How can you protect yourself from meditating on the wrong things? Why does this require practice?**

> Have someone in your group read Psalm 119:101-103.

- **Have you ever had your tastes totally change to the point that you enjoy foods you previously would not have liked?**

Through self-discipline, a person can actually change their habits and tastes as many can testify. People who previously only believed that a hot fudge sundae was the perfect dessert can come to enjoy some fresh fruit and healthy yogurt as a sweet indulgence. How does that happen? By following an intentional plan and exercising self-restraint.

The same is true spiritually. Through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, someone who enjoyed sinful behaviors can find themselves loving a godly lifestyle. It is about what the psalmist wrote in verse 101, “hold[ing] back [his] feet from every evil way, in order to keep [God’s] word.”

- **What does it mean to you to hold back your feet from every evil way?**

 - **How can being intentional about behavioral choices affect your tastes?**
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Do you know someone who speaks words that sound sweet? What makes a person's speech sweet or not? Much of it has to do with whether or not you agree with what is being said. Honey has long been a natural sweetener, so the psalmist used honey as a comparison to the way that he received God's Word and instructions. Think about it. A person who is not pursuing godly living does not enjoy hearing or reading instructions found in Scripture.

- **Why would God's Word and instruction not taste sweet to a lost person or even a worldly-minded person who claims to know Jesus?**

- **What could you be intentional about for Scripture to taste "sweeter" to you?**

> Have someone in your group read Psalm 119:104.

One key to enjoying the Word of God like the psalmist is found in verse 104. If you want to make better decisions so that you can enjoy and appreciate the instructions found in Scripture, then it would be wise to stop chasing after and loving what is contrary to His Word.

- **What are some common situations you face in daily life that would be considered the "false way"?**

The psalmist was bold enough to say he hated anything that is contrary to the Word. How many of us can say the same thing? Many people will claim to hate the things of the world that go against Scripture but do their actions line up with that? Too often we can be that person who says "I hate _____," and yet, our actions do not align with our words.

We don't chase after things we hate, so if you want to be wise like the psalmist—able to honestly say God's Word is sweeter

than honey to you—you must learn how to hate that which is contrary. God’s Word is clear that when we pray according to God’s will, He will hear and answer that prayer affirmatively (see 1 John 5:14-15). So, if you need to love God’s Word more and hate the false way more, ask God to help you do exactly that. Then follow the psalmist’s example and be intentional about your daily choices, pursuing the change you desire.

- **What encouragement do you find in today’s discussion?**

- **What are some “false ways” that you need to start hating?**

APPLICATION

- **To hate what keeps you from loving God’s Word the way that you need to, commit to praying specifically and asking God to help you choose behaviors that will change your tastes.**

- **Honestly evaluate where you need to practice more self-control and resist the things that are diluting your taste for things of the Lord. Write out a prayer asking God for strength and wisdom to apply what you learned this week.**

PRAY

Thank the Lord for how practical His Word is for your life. Confess any things God brought to your mind today that reveal what you really love and hate. Commit to responding to the Holy Spirit and invite Him to convict you before you choose the wrong thing to love.

PSALM 119:97-104

119:97. In Psalm 119 the psalmist does not just learn God’s word, but he loves it. His love for God’s instruction causes him to meditate on it continually (cf. Ps 1:2); and as he contemplates God’s truth, it is assimilated into his life so that he learns it, loves it, and lives it.

Notes:

119:98. God’s word protects him from the schemes of his wicked enemies. His enemies are shrewd, but what God says makes him wiser than they are. As Goldingay notes, “Obviously, people attacking the psalmist without reason and/or with deceit ignore both the content of Yhwh’s commands and the promises attached to them. They are stupid. They are ultimately bound to fail.” In line b the pronoun *hî’* (“they”) may be construed as a collective singular agreeing in sense with “your commands” in line a.

119:99. No doubt the psalmist has had human teachers who possess insight, but he asserts that in God’s word he has a teacher who surpasses them all. His greater insight comes from meditating on God’s decrees (cf. v. 97). Whatever he may have learned from his human instructors, the word of God is the advanced curriculum for his life, and by contemplating what God has said, he has been led to true insight (cf. 1 Chr 22:12; Jer 9:23–24).

119:100. It was widely assumed that the elders with their longer life experience had more wisdom (cf. Job 8:8–10; 32:6–7). What the psalmist understands exceeds what the elders have learned through their years of experience because his understanding is derived from the Lord (cf. Prov 2:6–7). This understanding is more than intellectual comprehension because he obeys the precepts of God. He does not just know what they are, but he keeps them.

119:101–102. In keeping with the wisdom instruction in Prov 4:26–27, the psalmist has been careful about the direction of his life by keeping his feet on God’s path. He has been intentional about his walk, following God’s word by his faithful walk on God’s way (cf. 2 Sam 22:22). He always keeps in mind that he is a student in the Lord’s school, and his chief purpose is to stay true to what the Lord has taught him.

Notes:

119:103. The psalmist’s exclamation about the sweetness of God’s word echoes the language of Ps 19:10. In biblical times honey was a highly valued delicacy and a rare sweetener, so it is a fitting image for how delectable God’s word is to him. As frequently throughout Psalm 119, God’s word is viewed in terms of delight and enjoyment because to the psalmist it is a sweet delight, not a bitter duty.

119:104. From God’s precepts the psalmist learns to discern between what is true and what is false. In the light of God’s word, he can see through sin for what it is and where it leads, and this understanding enables him to reject every false way (cf. v. 163). God’s word guards him against making wrong turns that lead to bad consequences.