



A LIGHT TO MY PATH
BUT YOU ARE NEAR, O LORD
PSALM 119:145-160

MAIN IDEA

Believers can cry out to God when troubles come and trust that the Lord is with them through it all.

INTRODUCTION

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

Who do you call then something good happens? When something bad happens? When you need help? We all have different people for different things. If you're going to play a sport, have a good meal, discuss your finances, remodel your house, take a trip, get your car worked on or whatever, there are certain people you turn to for each.

You don't schedule a mechanic when you need to bake cookies and you likely wouldn't call your accountant to help you decide how to handle a wayward child issue. You want help that is applicable to your specific situation.

- **Share the name of a person you call when something great happens in your life. Why do you go to this person?**
- **Who's the first person you call when tragedy hits or times get tough? Why?**

UNDERSTANDING

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

> Have someone in your group read
Psalm 119:145-149.

- **Where does God fall on your list of “favorites” to call?**

The psalmist demonstrated a powerful truth in this passage by crying out to the Lord. God is always there for you, whether things are going well or you're going through a tough time. The interesting thing is how long it takes for many of us to turn to the Lord or cry out to Him.

- **Why do you think we often try everything else before we take our concerns and needs to the Lord?**
- **Why is it wise to start with God, even before people in your life?**

These verses give an honest and real description of what a heart that needs God looks like, sounds like, and acts like. We would do well to emulate these same attitudes and actions. The psalmist liberally offered up promises and commitments reminiscent of our recent studies on loving God and recognizing the value of His Word in our lives.

- **What are some of the promises or commitments you see in verses 145-149?**

- **In conjunction with those statements, the psalmist sought after the Lord. What did he say or do that demonstrated his need for God?**

- **Which of these do you most do often? Which do you need to be more intentional about?**

> Have someone in your group read
Psalm 119:150-154.

No one is immune from trouble, trials, and persecution. There will always be people who come against you in some form as well as difficult issues you must face. The same was true for the psalmist. That's why he described his heart condition and how he reached out to God for help. These verses remind us of a powerful truth that we can never hear enough: God is with you no matter what you face.

- **Why is it vital to be reminded that God is with you when you face trials and troubles?**

When tough times come our way, it's easy to feel overwhelmed and think we are all alone fighting our battles. This is a tactic the enemy loves to use on believers because he knows we are vulnerable in those moments.

- **When have you felt isolated due to struggles you were facing?**

 - **How can you see the enemy using that against you?**
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The tactic of the psalmist in this passage is effective when facing difficulties because it focuses our hearts and minds on the Lord instead of anything else. Even though our tough situations won't magically disappear, when we take these to the Lord and seek after Him, we put ourselves in position to experience a victory. Because the Lord is near, you can cry out to Him in every situation and circumstance that comes your way.

- **How can crying out to God help you experience victory when you face difficulties?**

- **How has knowing that the Lord is near helped you in the past?**

> Have someone in your group read
Psalm 119:155-160.

The psalmist mentioned evil people who are far from God in one verse, then followed with acknowledging God's great mercy. Nearness to God or lack thereof—is always connected to the way we view God's Word and commandments.

- **How does God's mercy have a place in a passage referencing the evil people out to harm David?**

- **Why is it beneficial to consider the mercy of God when thinking or talking about people who persecute you?**

None of us is without fault and it's vital for us to recognize that without the mercy of God in our lives we are the evil people described in this passage. This recognition doesn't necessarily make it easier to deal with struggles, but it may change how we pray or even perceive those who come against us.

Sometimes it is easier to be more sorrowful about our circumstance than about a person who is far from God. Encounters with those who are far from God should lead to evaluating ourselves. That's not a bad thing. Note that the Psalmist said, "consider how I love your precepts" (v. 159), as if he was reinforcing his commitment to live as a godly person. Self-evaluation is a good thing and can be powerful tool in the lives of believers, as we seek to draw even closer to God when facing tough times.

- **Why is it important that believers never get calloused to the lost people around us?**
- **What other self-evaluating remarks do you see in these verses?**
- **How do you see self-evaluation being a helpful tool for you?**

APPLICATION

- **Read Psalm 119:145-160 again. Pull out 3-4 verses to focus on and maybe even memorize this week. Use these as you pray for the opportunity to have a spiritual conversation with someone this week.**
- **Write out your memory verse on a card or your bathroom mirror (using dry erase marker); notice the way your day is different when you meditate on the Lord being near.**

PRAY

Thank the Lord for being near to you in every circumstance. List specific ways you have seen and felt His presence in your life. Thank Him also for His great mercy and pray that lost people around you would choose to accept that free gift of grace.

PSALM 119:145-160

119:145–146. These closely related verses echo the language familiar in the lament psalms. Facing a situation of distress and adversity, the psalmist calls out to the Lord with all his heart (cf. v. 10). He is in peril, and he needs the Lord to save him. His adversity, however, has not diminished his commitment to the Lord, because as he calls he also affirms that he will obey the Lord's statutes and keep His decrees. **Notes:**

119:147–148. Reflecting a sense of eagerness and urgency, the psalmist rises before dawn (nešep, as in Job 3:9; 7:4) to pray for the Lord's help (cf. Mark 1:35). Rather than attempting to resolve the problem himself, he places his plight into the Lord's hands. His crisis does not control him, but he stays committed to the Lord, and he waits for His word (cf. Ps 130:5) to reassure him. The psalmist also anticipates the night watches as another opportunity to commune with the Lord (cf. Ps 63:6), when he can have quiet, undisturbed time to meditate on His promise. As he meditates on the word of God during the quiet of the night, what he knows is transformed into how he lives as he assimilates God's truth into his life.

119:149. Continuing with lament language, the psalmist calls on the Lord to hear his voice. He is confident that the Lord can hear, in contrast to the pagan idols that have ears but cannot hear (cf. Deut 4:28; Pss 115:6; 135:17). Basing his appeal on the faithful love and justice of the Lord, he asks the Lord to give him renewed life (cf. vv. 25, 37, 40, 88, 93, 107, 154, 159; 143:1). Because the Lord is the one who created life, he can revive life when it is flagging.

119:150. The occasion that prompted the psalmist's petition in vv. 145–149 is elucidated in v. 150. As his adversaries pursue their wicked plans (zimmâ here, as in Prov 10:23; 24:9, refers to sinful schemes), they are drawing near to the psalmist, and he feels them closing in on him. Even though he senses that he is nearly in their grasp, he views his problem through a theological lens rather than just as his personal crisis. In following after wickedness, his enemies have departed far from God's instruction, so the psalmist's foes are fundamentally the Lord's foes as well.

119:151. Even as his enemies come near (qārbû in v. 150), the psalmist is confident that the Lord is near (qārôb), and the Lord's nearness to him surpasses and negates their threat. Goldingay notes well, "Subjectively, one can cope with schemes being near if Yhwh is near; and objectively, their being near will not mean their schemes succeed if Yhwh is near." As in Ps 73:28, it is the nearness of the Lord that is good for the psalmist. He draws hope from the fact that the Lord is near and that His commands are reliable. He knows that neither the Lord nor His word will fail.

Notes:

119:152. The psalmist has long known the reliability of God's words. Because He has established them firmly, they will not fail, so they provide a firm foundation for all times and for every distress.

119:153. Once again employing standard lament language, the psalmist calls on the Lord to heed him and help him. He is hurting, so in words that echo Exod 3:7–8, he appeals to the Lord to consider or take notice of his affliction and to rescue (hls) him. He insists that he has not forgotten the Lord's instruction, even though obeying the Lord did not give him a pass on pain and problems. He wants the Lord not to forget him, just as he has not forgotten what the Lord has taught him (cf. vv. 16, 61).

119:154. Shifting to legal language, the psalmist calls on the Lord to champion his cause, or to be his legal defender (rîbâ rîbî, "champion my cause"). He is in great need for divine intervention on his behalf to redeem and to revive him, so he calls on the Lord to act according to His promises in giving him life.

119:155. The initial term rāhōq ("far") is antithetical to qrb, "near," in vv. 150–151. The wicked who position themselves far from the Lord are far from His deliverance, and therefore they are near disaster. The wicked have no interest in seeking out what the Lord has said. They do not want God's word in their lives, so the Lord is not there for them in their time of need. They are willfully ignorant of God's statutes, and they suffer because of their neglect.

119:156. In language that finds its source in the Lord's self-description in Exod 34:6 (cf. also Pss 86:15; 103:8), the psalmist extols the great compassions of the Lord. He needs the Lord to revive the vitality of his life that has been beaten down by his affliction, so he urges the Lord to act consistently with who He is and what He has said in His word.

Notes:

119:157. As the compassions of the Lord are many (v. 156), so the psalmist's persecutors and foes are many. He is up against significant pressure and hostility, but his situation does not divert his commitment from the Lord and His word. All his distresses have not deterred him from God's decrees. In the face of intense pressure, he perseveres in his commitment to God's word, listening to the direction of the Lord rather than to the threats of his enemies.

119:158. In the heat of his affliction, the psalmist clearly sees his enemies for what they are. He grasps the larger issue at stake—not just how they treat him but how they mistreat the Lord. At the root of their treachery is their arrogant rejection of the Lord and His word. Viewing their rejection of the Lord he trusts and His word that he loves, the psalmist feels a strong emotional revulsion for them (cf. similar sentiments in v. 53; Ps 139:21–22).

119:159. In contrast to v. 158, the psalmist delights in the word of the Lord that his enemies have dismissed. As in v. 97, he expresses his love for God's word as he calls on the Lord to act according to His faithful love in reviving him from the distress that has worn him down (cf. vv. 154, 156).

119:160. Expanding on his statement in v. 142b, the psalmist says that all God says is trustworthy and reliable. Each of the Lord's righteous standards is everlasting, not failing and never expiring. There is no hint of falseness or chance of failure in anything God has said. God's people can trust what He says because they trust the God who has said it. As Goldingay observes: "A person's word and decision reflect who they are. Yhwh is truthful and faithful; so then are Yhwh's word and decision."