

Reflection Psalm 119 v105

*Your word is a lantern to my feet
and a light upon my path*



Every year at around this time, my friends like to book a holiday for the following summer. If we visit them, their coffee table usually has a stack of brightly coloured brochures on it (with little bits of paper sticking out of the pages to mark the places they are interested in). It's a process for them, to look at all the options and then narrow down their choice to perhaps two or three options, and after further discussions amongst themselves and with the travel agent. Yes, they still use an agent – albeit on the phone rather than in a shop. They ask the agent if they have stayed where they want to go and trust what the agent says about the place they want to visit. Then, they make a final decision as to where they are going, what hotel they want, how they want to get there and then they book it, knowing as much as they can of what to expect before they go. This year of course, has been very different for all of us. Many plans have been scuppered and travels to distant and exotic lands have had to be put on hold.

But it got me thinking. We all like to know where we are going and something of what that journey, or destination may look like. We all like to feel safe in the knowledge that we may know a little of what to expect.

This line from psalm 119 gives us a gentle reminder and some hope that God is with us on our journey. I say "some hope" because if we look a little deeper at the words and think about the image they then create in our minds we can see that we are looking at only a snapshot of the whole (bigger) picture described by the psalmist.

This particular line tells me something of the nature of faith. God's word is lighting my way, but it is not floodlit. A lantern will give a certain amount of light, but it doesn't light the whole path. We are told that God's word is "a lantern to my feet" – so lighting the space just in front of where I am, so that I can see where I am putting my feet, but possibly only that.

This still requires some faith from me. I can't see what is beyond the light which is cast directly in front of me. My faith still requires me to put one foot in front of the other, trusting in God's leading as I cannot see the whole way. I may not even be able to see more than just a few steps in front of me.

But this means that this journey can only be taken if I am walking with God. It is a two-way companionship. His light can only be my guide if I choose to walk into it and continue to walk with it. And I can only walk if I have at least some light to see.

We never see God's full plan, and that can be hard because we all want to see the end. The unknown is scary and we as human beings are programmed to fear the unknown; but that is where the true nature of faith and trusting in God's faithfulness comes into its own.

For God to be shining a lantern that gives just enough light to illuminate the path directly in front of my feet, he must be standing fairly close to me. Walking right beside me!

That changes everything doesn't it? We are no longer walking to God and into his light, but we are walking with God beside us, as he holds the lantern to light the way for both of us. Him and me. We are walking together on this path. Yes, his light guides the way, but we are side by side. Stepping out together.

It is my path, as the psalm says, but I am no longer alone walking towards a distant God who is shining a light in order for me to find him.

Instead, I am walking with my God who has already found me and is walking with me, holding up the lantern so that we can walk the rest of the way together. God has already come from there, he is leading me home. Returning with me at his side.

May the light of God's lantern shine in your life this day and every day.
May you know that he walks with you, close enough to light the space just in front of your feet.
Leading you home

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