



Episode 46: Receive the Shadows and Light

I'm Emily P. Freeman and welcome to The Next Right Thing. You're listening to episode 46.

We're continuing our summer series this week so if this is your first time listening in, the format is a little bit different than normal. I'll start by reading a portion of scripture and then offer a short reflection, but all of this is designed just like always to help you to discern your next right thing.

In the Fall we'll pick back up with our regular episodes, but for now we're slowing it down a bit, instead of giving practical tips for your decision, I'm hoping to simply collect a series of still moments here in these episodes you can come back to help you create some space for your soul to breathe so that you can discern your next right thing in love.

As always you can find me on Instagram [@emilypfreeman](https://www.instagram.com/emilypfreeman) or online at emilypfreeman.com where you can find a recent post I wrote called My Summer in 20 Books where I share a list of books on my shelf this summer: some I've read, some I'm reading, some I hope to read, and many I have to read for my graduate classes.

You can find that post at emilypfreeman.com/summer-books or just click the link in the show notes of this episode.

For now, I want to invite you to settle in for the next few moments and receive these words from Psalm 139.

"You have enclosed me behind and before,

And laid Your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;

It is *too* high, I cannot attain to it.

Where can I go from Your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from Your presence?

If I ascend to heaven, You are there;
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there.

If I take the wings of the dawn,
If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea,

Even there Your hand will lead me,
And Your right hand will lay hold of me.

If I say, "Surely the darkness will overwhelm me,
And the light around me will be night,"

Even the darkness is not dark to You,
And the night is as bright as the day.
Darkness and light are alike *to You*.

For You formed my inward parts;
You wove me in my mother's womb.

I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Wonderful are Your works,
And my soul knows it very well.

My frame was not hidden from You,
When I was made in secret,
And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth;

Your eyes have seen my unformed substance;
And in Your book were all written
The days that were ordained *for me*,
When as yet there was not one of them.

How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!

If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand.
When I awake, I am still with You.
Psalm 139:5-18

This is the word of the Lord. It is absolutely true and given to us in love.

Our eyes are drawn to the light. In art, in photography, in life. In the morning we open the curtains to bring in the light. After days of cloud and rain, we walk outside when the sun comes out again. It's hard to capture and impossible to hold but sitting in it, basking in it is one way we try.

By the warm light of a fire, we see his eyes dance. By the glow of a burned down candle, the dinner plates look like an art project. In midday, the patch of yellow moving slow on the living room floor is our silent company while we fold the towels.

As the sun slides graceful through a seasonal sky, reflecting off water and windows, we consider the gift of light and all the ways God shows up in the daytime, carrying a secret message of joy.

Looking out through the dim light of the world, may we continue to turn to the bright light of His presence within us.

Like children emerging from the chill of an early summer swim, searching for bright patches of grass and concrete may we too search for the bright patches of our lives.

Am I allowing light to do what light does best - to warm, fill, and lift?

While we learn to embrace the light, may we not forget the gift of the darkness.

Holding the baby, just twelve hours old, her eyes are shut tight to defend against the world. For her, light is the stranger, *darkness* is her comforting friend. She has only

known darkness within the body of her mother, and we will not take it away from her too quickly. For now, the darkness speaks of safety because that's what it is to her.

We dare not push her into the light before she is ready. Her eyes will adjust in her own time and in her own way.

Am I allowing the darkness to do what the darkness does best - cover, protect, and grow?

God declares his glory in the light, but first, he forms new life in the dark, bringing it to the surface in His time and in His own way. God is with us in the light of day and in the darkest night.

“Even the darkness is not dark to You, and the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike to You.”

May our friend, Jesus, be your hope in the light and your companion in the darkness as he helps you to discern your next right thing in love.