



Heart Songs: Week Four | Safe and Sound (Psalm 91)

Reading Plan Description:

It can be a struggle to trust God in our daily lives, and going through trials can make it even more difficult to fully allow ourselves to trust God. In this five-day reading plan, Lenya Heitzig guides you through Psalm 91 to describe how you can fully depend on God through every season of your life. This includes how to continue to rely on God after He delivers victory and not fall away once a prayer has been answered. "Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart" (Psalm 91:3-4, NIV). Learn how to trust God through times of battle and triumph.

Day 1: He Is My Dwelling

Charles Wesley, one of the greatest hymn writers of all time, penned the words to the acclaimed hymn "Jesus, Lover of My Soul." The lyrics "All my trust on Thee is stayed, all my help from Thee I bring; cover my defenseless head with the shadow of Thy wings" are just a taste of a hymn that proclaims a steadfast faith amidst a sea of turmoil and sings of grace and freedom found only in the safety of the Lord.

A literal storm is the story behind the creation of this great hymn. In the fall of 1736, Charles Wesley was returning to England after serving as Governor Oglethorpe's secretary in the new colony of Georgia. Wesley was on the way home when his ship suddenly hit a fierce storm which threatened to sink the ship along with its passengers. Frightened by the raging skies, a tiny bird flew into Wesley's window and found solace in the folds of his coat. By the grace of God, the ship was spared, and Wesley went on to write the famed hymn.



As Christians it is unrealistic to expect to escape from the storms of life. We may feel helpless living in a world where terrorist attacks, uncontrolled riots, and mysterious illnesses dominate the news. However, we can choose to follow the psalmist's advice to take refuge under God's wing and trust in Him for our safety.

Scholars believe Psalms 90 to 106 were compiled during Israel's exile in Babylon. These comforting verses reminded the Israelites of God's past faithfulness. They also encouraged the people to trust God in the present for the future.

Psalm 91 is known as a psalm of trust. This psalm reminds us that God has always desired to dwell with His people. Long before He sent the Holy Spirit to dwell with and be in us (see John 14:16-17), God invited His people to dwell with Him. Today you'll learn about the security of those who know *He is my dwelling*.

Read the verses below and answer the following questions:

"Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High
will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.
I will say of the LORD, 'He is my refuge and my fortress,
my God, in whom I trust'" (Psalm 91:1-2, NIV).

Practical Observation

1. The phrase "he who dwells" applies to all who desire to remain somewhere. Where do these people dwell?
2. What is the result of dwelling in this place?

God's Refuge: *Abide means to lodge or pass the night, and shadow simply means shade. Those who sit close to God are naturally shaded from the scorching sun and sheltered from life's harsh elements. He is "a refuge from the storm, a shade from the heat" (Isaiah 25:4).*

3. The psalmist had firsthand experience dwelling "in the secret place of the Most High" and abiding "under the shadow of the Almighty." What other titles for the Most High did he use in verse 2?
4. Which two symbolic images describe the Lord?

God's Protection: *While the term refuge portrays a quiet retreat, the word fortress (also translated castle) presents the idea of a towering defense against the enemy's attacks (Mary B. Duncan, as quoted in Charles H. Spurgeon, The Treasury of David: Volume Two [Hendrickson Publishers, 1876], 97). Such images are used throughout the psalms to portray God's protection and strength. "For You have been a shelter for me, a strong tower from the enemy" (Psalm 61:3-4).*

5. Having recognized God's awesome power to protect, what vow did the psalmist make?



Personal Application

a. Dwelling in God's presence results in abiding—which means *passing the night*—under His peaceful yet powerful protection. What are the temptations, terrors, or troubles you face in the "night" seasons or dark times of life? How do you typically respond in those situations (e.g., lose sleep, read your Bible, be still and know that He is God, pray, give up, let thoughts run wild, ask for help, escape, withdraw).

b. The psalmist used four different names for God in verses 1 and 2, ultimately proclaiming, "In Him I will trust" (v. 2). Based on the definitions and verses below, how does each of God's names cause you to trust Him more?

1. **Most High** (*Elyon*): Portrays God as owner of heaven and earth. "Let them know that you... alone are the Most High over all the earth" (Psalm 83:18, NIV).

2. **Almighty** (*Shaddai*): Conveys God's all-sufficient provision for His people. "The Almighty will be your gold and your precious silver; for then you will have your delight in the Almighty.... You will make your prayer to Him, He will hear you" (Job 22:25-27).

3. **Lord** (*Jehovah*): Expresses His personal, promise-keeping relationship with His people. "I will maintain my love to him forever, and my covenant with him will never fail" (Psalm 89:28, NIV).

4. **My God** (*Elohim*): Reveals His triune nature and power as Creator (definitions adapted from John Phillips, *Exploring Psalms: Volume Two* [Kregel Academic & Professional, 2002], 29-30). "You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Marvelous are Your works" (Psalm 139:13-14).

Take refuge in the Lord. There isn't a more secure refuge because Jesus is everything we need to be safe and sound.

Verses:

John 14:16-17

Psalm 91:1-2

Isaiah 25:4

Psalm 61:3-4

Psalm 83:18

Job 22:25-27

Psalm 89:28

Psalm 139:13-14

Day 2: He Is My Deliverer

Two Irishmen were crossing the Atlantic together on a large ship. The ship sank and the two men, Mike and Pat, narrowly escaped death. In the icy ocean water, they floundered around clinging to a couple of planks. Both men thought they were at the end of their life.



Pat was addicted to using obscene profanity and decided that if he repented from it, the Lord would come to his rescue. Mike listened to his friend's plan, thought his theology was sound, and encouraged Pat to go ahead. Pat started to pray, but just before he reached the main point of his repentant prayer, Mike spotted a ship coming toward them.

The sight of that rescue vessel made Mike feel as delighted as Christopher Columbus must have felt when he first spotted the North American shore. Mike hollered, "Hold it, Pat! Don't commit yourself! Here's a ship!" Pat immediately stopped praying (adapted from Charles R. Swindoll, *The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart and 1,501 Other Stories* [Nashville: Word Publishing, 1998]). Doesn't this story resemble how many of us handle situations that need prayer? We pray when we are in a jam, yet as soon as things improve we forget God.

The psalmist in today's verses had been rescued from death. Instead of forgetting the Lord, he celebrated God's faithfulness in his life knowing *He is my deliverer*.

Read the verses below and answer the following questions:

"Surely he will save you
from the fowler's snare
and from the deadly pestilence.
He will cover you with his feathers,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart" (Psalm 91:3-4, NIV).

Practical Observation

1. According to the psalm, what will God surely do for you?
2. Describe the two dangers from which you need deliverance.

Protected from Spiritual Attacks: *A fowler is someone who traps or hunts birds for sport or food. Perilous pestilence means destruction or plague resulting from mischief and perversity. These words could refer to spiritual attacks. "Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around...looking for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8, NLT).*

3. What imagery does the psalmist use to portray God's protection of His own? Do you think this is a good description? Why or why not?
4. According to the psalm, how does God shield His own?

Protected from Direct Attacks: *A shield protects against frontal attacks; a buckler is a piece of armor that surrounds the body. Truth, which means faithfulness to a set standard, is one of God's moral and personal characteristics (Nelson's Bible Dictionary [Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2005], PC Study*



Bible). The truth of God's unwavering Word surrounds us like impenetrable armor. "The entirety of Your word is truth" (Psalm 119:160).

Personal Application

- a. God is often portrayed in Scripture as the protective parent of helpless young birds. How does being covered with God's wings make you feel?
- b. Scripture teaches that the following can be found under God's wings: deliverance, joy, comfort, refuge, support, and healing. Which of these do you need the most today? Pray to your heavenly Father using Psalm 61:4 as a guide. "I will abide in Your tabernacle forever; I will trust in the shelter of Your wings."
- c. Satan has been setting traps for God's children since the garden of Eden. Because Satan is the father of lies (see John 8:44), our greatest weapon against him is God's truth. What lie has become a snare to you? What steps will you take to combat this lie and surround yourself with truth (e.g., pray for spiritual discernment, study and memorize Scripture, seek biblical counseling)?

In today's verses, the psalmist celebrated God's faithfulness to rescue us from death. God has not forgotten us, but as the prophet Isaiah said, "Yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands" (Isaiah 49:15-16). Those who believe He is faithful know they are safe and sound.

Verses:

Psalm 91:3-4

1 Peter 5:8

Psalm 119:160

Psalm 61:4

John 8:44

Isaiah 49:15-16

Day 3: He Is My Peace

Charles Fuller worked as the manager of a fruit packing house in Southern California, yet he was restless. It was 1919 and he had a growing conviction that God wanted him to resign from his job and attend the Bible Institute of Los Angeles to train for ministry.

One April morning, his conviction grew so strong that he walked downstairs and knelt in prayer in the back of a storage room filled with orange boxes. Fear gripped him because he didn't have the speaking ability for preaching. He prayed, "Oh, Lord, I will walk in your path. I will even try to preach. I will resign my position and trust you to supply our needs as I prepare for ministry."

God's peace flooded his soul and soon he notified the packing house board that he would be resigning to study at Biola in the fall. They were sad at this news and one of them said, "Charlie, you're too good a man for the ministry. You should stay here. Why, a minister only has to work one day a week—Sunday,



when he preaches." But for Charles Fuller there was no turning back. He had learned that *He is our peace*. Fuller was a pioneer in Christian radio. He preached every week for nearly thirty years to twenty million people on *Old Fashioned Revival Hour* broadcast live from Long Beach Auditorium in California (adapted from Robert J. Morgan, *Nelson's Complete Book of Stories, Illustrations & Quotes* [Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000]).

Read the verses below and answer the following questions:

You will not fear the terror of night,
nor the arrow that flies by day,
nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness,
nor the plague that destroys at midday.
A thousand may fall at your side,
ten thousand at your right hand,
but it will not come near you.
You will only observe with your eyes
and see the punishment of the wicked" (Psalm 91:5-8, NIV).

Practical Observation

1. Since God has covered us with His feathers, His wings, and His truth, how should we respond?
2. What four threats could grip us with fear? At what time of day do they strike?
3. Summarize how God can protect in the face of attack.
4. Explain what those left standing will witness.

Personal Application

- a. God protects those who abide in His shadow. Despite the Enemy's plots, the world's corruption, and our body's frailty, we need not be afraid. What events in your life have made or are making you feel afraid?
- b. Paul gives us a list of dos and don'ts in Philippians 4:6-7: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." What does Paul tell us not to do? What does he tell us to do? How can you apply these verses to the situations that make you afraid?

Through today's verses we affirm God is our peace even through life's trials. Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you.... Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

Verses:

Psalm 91:5-8



Philippians 4:6-7
John 14:27

Day 4: He Is My Protector

In 1947, missionaries Dick and Margaret Hillis and their four children settled in the Honan province of China. Nearby, a mission church swelled with nearly one thousand Chinese people each Sunday. There was an impending war between Chiang Kai-shek and the forces of Mao Tse-tung.

One day, Nationalist Captain Hwang urgently told Mr. Hillis, "You had better take your family and flee." But it was too late. They had blown up all the railroad bridges. That evening, the Hillis family heard the first shots, and soon a battle raged around them. The city soon fell, and the streets filled with Communist troops.

Then, a new danger emerged. The Nationalist troops were lobbing shells at the rebels and one night, every shell that dropped exploded closer and closer to the Hillis' home. The house next door exploded killing the entire family, and it appeared the Hillis' home would be next. The house quaked. The children screamed and the family prepared to die. Then, the shelling abruptly stopped and the Hillis family cautiously emerged. The room was filled with debris, but no one was hurt.

As Dick tucked his children into bed, he knelt beside Margaret Anne and noticed a dirty scrap of paper stuffed under her pillow. Printed in large childish letters were these words: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1). Little Margaret Anne had been resting on a big promise from a faithful God (adapted from Robert J. Morgan, *Nelson's Complete Book of Stories, Illustrations & Quotes* [Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000]). Even at a young age, she had learned the wisdom of the psalmist to make God her refuge.

In addition to providing shelter, deliverance, and freedom from fear, God promises to guard our lives with His heavenly hosts. The angels of God have a special charge to accompany, defend, and preserve you. Against their power, the influence of evil spirits cannot prevail. When necessary, your steps will be turned away from danger to ward it off when it comes across your path. You may never know the many times God has sheltered you from evil, but the truth remains that you and I can rest easily when we embrace this truth: *He is my protector.*

Read the verses below and answer the following questions:

"If you say, 'The LORD is my refuge,'
and you make the Most High your dwelling,
no harm will overtake you,
no disaster will come near your tent.
For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways;
they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.



You will tread upon the lion and the cobra;
you will trample the great lion and the serpent" (Psalm 91:9-13, NIV).

Practical Observation

1. These verses begin with a condition: "If you say, 'The LORD is my refuge'...[then] no harm will overtake you." Why do you think God makes some of His promises conditional? Do you ever put conditions on your promises? Why?

- a. Under what conditions are we safe from evil?
- b. According to the psalm, what does God promise will not happen?

Sign: *The Israelites were immune from the plagues that tormented the Egyptians while God afflicted the unrepentant to get their attention. "The blood on your doorposts will serve as a sign.... When I see the blood, I will pass over you. This plague of death will not touch you when I strike the land of Egypt" (Exodus 12:13, NLT).*

2. Describe what someone who is guarded by God's angels is empowered to do.

Spirits: *Angels are created beings who do God's bidding, "ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation" (Hebrews 1:14, NIV). In today's passage from Psalms, the lion and cobra are positioned as strong and cunning opponents that could represent the forces of evil. "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet" (Romans 16:20, NIV).*

Personal Application

a. Today we are comforted with the knowledge that God assigns His angels to guard us, protecting us from dangerous spiritual enemies (lions and cobras) and small annoyances (stones that cause us to stumble). Think of a time when you believe God's angels intervened in your life, whether in a big or small way. Thank God for His intimate involvement in the big battles and the small details of your life.

b. Psalm 91 was used by Satan to tempt Jesus in the wilderness. As Jesus continually quoted Scripture in response to temptation, Satan ultimately misquoted verses 11-12 in an attempt to trap Jesus.

1. Read Matthew 4:5-7. What key phrase from Psalm 91 did Satan omit?
2. Why do you think the phrase Satan omitted is vital to understanding God's protection? What consequences do you think could result from believing Satan's version of verses 11-12?

In Scripture, Satan is compared to a roaring lion, a snake, and a dragon (sometimes translated *serpent*). As followers of Jesus, we must stand on God's Word. If we do, we'll surely be safe and sound.

Verses:

Psalm 46:1



Psalm 91:9-13
 Exodus 12:13
 Hebrews 1:14
 Romans 16:20
 Matthew 4:5-7

Day 5: He Is My Savior

One Sunday in Copenhagen, Corrie ten Boom spoke at a service and urged her audience to present their bodies to Christ as living sacrifices. Afterward, two young nurses invited her to their apartment for lunch. On the way, Corrie learned they lived on the tenth floor with no elevator. She was eighty years old.

Corrie didn't think she could climb the stairs, but she decided to try. On the fifth floor, her heart pounded, her breath gasped, and her legs buckled. Thinking she could go no further, she collapsed in a chair on the landing. The stairs seemed to go up into infinity. She continued climbing with one nurse in front and the other behind. When she reached the apartment, Corrie met the parents of one of the girls. Neither parent was a Christian, but both were eager to hear the gospel. Corrie carefully explained the plan of salvation. "I have traveled in more than sixty countries and have never found anyone who said they were sorry they had given their hearts to Jesus," she said. That day both prayed for Christ to enter their lives.

As she walked down the steps, Corrie prayed, "Thank you, Lord, for making me walk up all these steps. And next time, Lord, I'm willing to go anywhere you tell me to go—even up ten flights of stairs" (adapted from Robert J. Morgan, *Nelson's Complete Book of Stories, Illustrations & Quotes* [Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000]). The verses in today's psalm affirm our salvation in the Lord, but also encourage us to show others our salvation. Are you prepared to tell others the good news about Jesus and declare *He is my Savior*?

Read the verses below and answer the following questions:

"'Because he loves me,' says the LORD, 'I will rescue him;
 I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.
 He will call on me, and I will answer him;
 I will be with him in trouble,
 I will deliver him and honor him.
 With long life I will satisfy him
 and show him my salvation'" (Psalm 91:14-16).

Practical Observation

1. In these verses, the psalmist promises to do some things, and God promises to do some specific things in response. What are we to do? What will God do in response?



2. Why do you think God places special emphasis on knowing His name?

His Name: *The Hebrew word for name, shem, implies honor, character, and authority. Those who know God's name have experienced Him personally and are set on high, meaning they are inaccessible, safe, and strong. "Those who know Your name will put their trust in You" (Psalm 9:10).*

3. What does God promise to do when we call upon Him? What other ways does God bless those who love Him?

His Blessing: *Jews viewed long life as God's blessing on the God-fearing (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Zondervan, 2001], PC Study Bible). Though some lives are seemingly cut short, those who cling to God are promised fulfilling lives and eternal life. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever" (Psalm 23:6).*

Personal Application

a. Psalm 91 emphasizes the importance of knowing God's name. Those who know God's name have personal experience and intimate knowledge of His character. Considering this description, do you know Him? If you answered no or you are unsure but you want to know Him, say a prayer expressing your desire. If you answered yes, thank God for the privilege of knowing His name. "The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe" (Proverbs 18:10).

b. God promises to satisfy—to completely fill—those who call upon Him. How has God filled your cup to overflowing since the day you first called upon the name of Jesus for salvation?

Have you ever bragged about knowing someone important? The great I Am wants you to know His name! He invites you to call upon Him, "for 'whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved'" (Romans 10:13). As we get to know and understand our Savior, we realize that we couldn't be more safe and sound.

Verses:

Psalm 91:14-16

Psalm 9:10

Psalm 23:6

Proverbs 18:10

Romans 10:13

