

**PLEASE DON'T READ THESE NOTES UNTIL YOU HAVE COMPLETED YOUR LESSON.  
YOU WILL ROB YOURSELF OF THE JOY OF DISCOVERY!**

### PREPARATION

1. Before you read **Psalm 91**, ask the Holy Spirit to teach you and guide you into all truth (John 16:13). We have been using the prayer, *Holy Spirit, think through me until your ideas become my ideas*, or King David's prayer, *Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in your law*.
2. Read **Psalm 91** slowly and thoughtfully in at least two translations. As you read and reread, mark any words or phrases that are meaningful to you and put a question mark by anything that you don't understand.

Reader A: Odd verses

Reader B: Even Verses

3. Give this Psalm a short title or summarize the psalm in one sentence.

#### Safe in the Shadow

4. What are some *word pictures* you see in **Psalm 91** and what do you think is the *dominate image* in the psalm?  
shadow, refuge, fortress, traps, feathers and wings of a bird, fatal plague, shield, rampart (barricade), enemies that stalk and destroy, dwelling or home, lion and cobra,  
Dominate image: protection

### QUESTIONS

#### AN INVITATION TO THE PROTECTION OF GOD (91:1-2)

5. Paraphrase **91:1** to read as an *if/then* statement. If I \_\_\_\_\_ . . . , then I will \_\_\_\_\_ . . .  
If I dwell (live) in the shelter (secret place) of the Most High,  
Then I will (find) rest in the shadow of the Almighty.
- ♥ What is the significance of the words *shelter* and *shadow*? What do these words suggest?  
Safe places of protection from harmful or hurtful things; places out of the "heat"; places where harm and hurt cannot come into; image of a bird under whose wings the baby birds find safety
- ♥ What is the significance of the words *dwell* and *rest*? What do these words suggest?  
Dwell seems to carry the idea of residing or permanence, someplace where you are comfortable and at home; rest is a place of peace, restoration, absence of striving
6. What do you think a person has to do in order to "dwell (live) in the shelter of the Most High?"  
Answers will vary:  
Stay close to God; depend on God; practice God's presence; read his Word; listen to what he is saying; being intimate with God ; obeying God; loving God
7. What four names for God are used in **91:1-2** and what is something that each name reveals about God?  
Most High – Supreme, independent, ultimate, highest, greatest  
Almighty – all powerful, most powerful, authoritative, dominant, strong  
LORD – Lord God Yahweh (Jehovah)- covenant keeping God  
My God – God is up close and personal; he invites us to have an intimate relationship with him

All these names cause us to be very confident in our God and his power

8. What four positive statements does the psalmist make about God in **91:2**?

God (alone) is my refuge; God is my fortress (place of safety); God is MY God, I trust in God

- ♥ Is it important to *say* or *declare* these things (**91:2**)? Why or why not?  
Words have power and instill confidence. If we say thing out loud to others and God, they can keep us accountable and help us "keep our word" when we need it.
  - ♥ To whom do you think the psalmist was speaking to in **91:2**? Does it matter? Why or why not?  
Could be declared to ourselves, others or God. (see above)
9. Read **91:2** in the *Amplified* translation. What activities and attitudes would you find in a person's life as evidence of their trust in God?  
Lean and rely on God, confidently trust God; tell others and God of my trust. It would be hard to do these things unless your were well acquainted with God, reading and meditating on His Word and talking and listening to him in prayer
- ♥ What evidence is there in your own life that demonstrates your trust in God?

#### TYPES OF PROTECTION (91:3-8)

10. Read **91:3** in all four translations. What could be some physical and spiritual examples of the two things God promises to rescue us from if we put our trust in him?

The Message say God rescues us from **hidden traps** and shield us from deadly hazards. Have your group share examples of hidden traps and deadly hazards that we face in our world. These could be from the natural world, man-made, or from the spiritual world.

- ♥ *How* are some ways that God rescues and protects us from these types of things?
  - ♥ Share with your group a time when you were aware of God's protection in one of these areas.
11. What two, but very different, images (word pictures) of protection are given in **91:4**?  
Wings and feathers (probably a mother bird) and shield and rampart (barricade or battlement)

What do each of these images communicate about God?

Each type of protection shows a different facet of God. Feathers, wings and a mother bird is more nurturing, comforting, and of self-sacrificial. The idea of shields and barricades shows God's power and might in not letting anything harmful in.

- ♥ Give an example of a situation where you would want the softness of *wings and feathers* as protection as well as an example of a situation where you would want the hard, solid protection of a *shield and armor*. (**91:4**)
- ♥ What types of disasters might be indicated in **91:5-8**?  
The Lord gives security from all natural and supernatural causes of "fear", whether war or disease or disaster.

What do you think the psalmist is trying to convey by using the images of day and night?

Day and night – his protection is 24/7; there is no limit to his protection because he has full authority over all things that happen on earth.

- ♥ What image of God do you prefer: (a) Mother hen? (b) Shield? (c) Fortress? (d) Immune system? (e) Force field? Explain your answer.

#### AN INVITATION TO THE PROTECTION OF GOD (91:9-10)

12. According to **91:9-10**, is God's protection available to everyone? Why or why not?

God's protection is promised to those who make the Most High their dwelling, refuge, and shelter. This indicates that God's protection is promised to those who LIVE WITH God; those who know him well and have an intimate relationship.

- ♥ What does it mean to make God your dwelling (refuge, shelter)?
  - ♥ What are some specific things you would suggest a person do if they want to make sure they have God's protection?
13. Do the promises of protection in this psalm, and the words in **91:10** in particular, mean that one who puts their trust God will be exempt from disaster, harm, pressures and problems? Why or why not? **The promise is not that we won't have trouble, grief or hard times. The promise is that is won't harm or destroy us. Safe in God's arms, troubles that do come into our lives are used by God for our good and his glory. He promises that our wounds won't destroy us. Verse 15 says that God will be with us in trouble. Everyone has trouble, but not everyone has God WITH them in their trouble.**
14. Read the following scriptures and then express what you think it means for the God-lover to experience God's protection. **2 Corinthians 11:23-28; 12:7-10; Romans 8:16-18, 28, 31, 35-39.** **These scriptures clearly show that we will have suffering in this life, especially suffering because we are Christians. God's promise is that he will always give us what we need to endure the suffering and even turn it into something good and positive in our lives. These words from Romans sums up this thought:**

**. . .in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

#### **TYPES OF PROTECTION (91:11-13)**

15. What is one type of protection promised to those who put their trust in God? **91:11-12**  
**Angels will guard and protect us and keep us from harm**

What else do you learn about this type of protection in **Psalm 34:7** and **Hebrews 1:14**?

**Psalms 34:7** The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.

**Hebrews 1:14** Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?

- ♥ Think about all the potential for harm in your life. Could angels be guarding you? Can you think of instance when you were miraculously delivered or protected "against all odds"?
- ♥ Who quotes **Psalm 91:11-12** in **Matthew 4:1-7**? What do you learn about God's protection in this encounter?  
**Satan quotes the verses from Psalm 91 to Jesus when he was tempting him. He tempted Jesus to act presumptuously by putting himself purposely in danger, just to see if God would protect him. Jesus said that we test God when we deliberately put ourselves in danger and then expect God or his angles to protect us. We would be trying to get God to prove himself and his promises just for the sake of testing his word. This is not the kind of protection that God promises.**

16. With the help of angels, what will God enable you to do? **91:13**  
**Trample down lions and poisonous snakes; crush fierce lions and serpents under our feet**

What types of things might these word pictures represent?

These are word pictures for any dangerous or difficult task we face. Sometimes we have to do something that we just don't have the ability or strength to do. God promises supernatural power, sometimes given in the form of angels helping or protecting us.

- ♥ How has your attitude toward the dangers of life changed in light of what you have learned about God's character and protection in **Psalm 91**?

### GOD'S PROMISES (91:14-16)

17. In **91:14-16**, how does the psalmist emphasize that the conditional promises of trust and protection given in **Psalm 91** are really true and trustworthy?

God is speaking these verses. God himself is making these promises

To whom are the words of **91:14-16** addressed?

To the one who loves God. (Love signifies a deep longing and desire for God. To love God is to put him first in your life, above and before everyone and everything.)

18. What eight promises does God make in **91:14-16**?

I will rescue them

I will protect them

I will answer them

I will be with them in trouble

I will deliver them

I will honor them

I will satisfy them with a long life

I will show them my salvation

On what three conditions do these promises rest? **91:14-15**

Those that love God;

those that acknowledge or trust God's name;

those that call upon God

- ♥ Appraise yourself on each of the three conditions. How do you rate? How can you improve?
- ♥ Do you expect God to fulfill the eight promises of **91:14-16** in your life? Why or why not?
- ♥ The phrase "I will protect him" in **91:14** literally means "I will set him inaccessibly high" or "raise him to a high, secure place". What does this literal meaning add to your understanding of God's protection?  
God is not only with us in trouble, but he protects us in such a way that the harm that comes from trouble cannot even touch us.
- ♥ Count how many times the word "**will**" is used in **Psalm 91** in the New International Version. How does the continual use of this word emphasize the message of **Psalm 91**?  
"will" is the opposite of "maybe" – If God says he will do something, then he will! We need to be just as definite in our commitment to God.

### RESPONSE:

How can you deliberately take refuge in God? How can you avail yourself of God's protection? Take some time to think about and answer the following questions:

- 1) Make a list of fears and troubles for which you want to trust God for deliverance and protection.
- 2) According to **Psalm 91**, what is your part in experiencing God's deliverance and protection?
- 3) How will you go about doing what you need to do?

See if anyone would like to share their answers as an example

See if anyone did the optional exercise. Some might want to share their "letters" or you could just talk about the exercise itself. Was it easy? Hard? Helpful? Useful? Impossible? etc.

**OPTIONAL EXERCISE:** *He will call upon me, and I will answer him . . . Psalm 91:15*

Ask God to speak to you concerning the following question: *Lord, how can I dwell in the shelter of the Most High? (91:1) What do I need to do?* (Or phrase your own question from **Psalm 91**).

**To hear God's answer, do the following:**

- Block out some time to be alone, quieting yourself, becoming still in God's presence;
- With the eyes of your heart, picture yourself with Jesus (perhaps using a scene from the Gospels);
- After becoming comfortable with seeing yourself with Jesus, ask him your question. Listen to what Jesus is saying to you *through your thoughts* to answer your question;
- Write down the thoughts that come to your mind, phrasing them as a personal letter from God to you.

**When you are finished, reread what you have written.** Does what you have written seem to be God's words to you? Is it *pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere (James 3:17)*? Is it *true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8)*?

**Share your "letter" with someone else.** What do they sense about these being God's words to you?

On the next page is all the "extra scripture" from this lesson in case you want to make copies for your group so that you can easily read together the verses referred to in the questions.

**2Corinthians 11:23** Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. **24** Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. **25** Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, **26** I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. **27** I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. **28** Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.

**2Corinthians 12:7** To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. **8** Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. **9** But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. **10** That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

**Romans 8:16** The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. **17** Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

**18** I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

**28** And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

**31** What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?

**35** Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? **36** As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." **37** No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. **38** For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, **39** neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Psalms 34:7** The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.

**Hebrews 1:14** Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?

**Matthew 4:1** Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. **2** After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. **3** The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

**4** Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

**5** Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. **6** "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"

**7** Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"