



LESSON 20: AN OFFER YOU CAN'T REFUSE! PSALM 91

BACKGROUND

Psalm 91 is a *Song of Wisdom* because it gives us advice on how to live life. This psalm teaches us that if we live according to God's truth, our lives will see some powerful and positive consequences. The psalmist invites us to put our trust and confidence in God because it is only God who has the strength and wisdom to protect us from all that can harm us. This protection, however, is not automatic. It is up to us to **trust** (*lean on, rely on and put our confidence in*) God's character and promises.

Psalm 91 shows us that even though God offers refuge and shelter, we must **respond** to his offer if we are going to experience his protection. A footnote in the Amplified Bible states: *The rich promises of this whole chapter are dependent on one's meeting exactly the conditions of the first two verses.* In this psalm, taking refuge in God is not a command; it is an invitation. It is an invitation that we should find hard to refuse!

DISCUSSION STARTER

- What are some things that endanger your health and safety in today's world?
- What emotions do you feel when you think about the dangers you face?

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.
3. Give this Psalm a short title or summarize the psalm in one sentence.
4. What are some *word pictures* you see in **Psalm 91** and what do you think is the *dominate image* in the psalm?

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 _____ . . .

♥ What is the significance of the words *shelter* and *shadow*? What do these words suggest?

♥ What is the significance of the words *dwelt* and *rest*? What do these words suggest?

6. What do you think a person has to do in order to "dwell (live) in the shelter of the Most High?"

7. What four names for God are used in **91:1-2** and what is something that each name reveals about God?

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

♥ Is it important to *say* or *declare* these things (**91:2**)? Why or why not?

♥ To whom do you think the psalmist was speaking to in **91:2**? Does it matter? Why or why not?

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?

♥ 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?

♥ *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**?

What do each of these images communicate about God?

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

- ♥ 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?
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.**

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

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

- ♥ 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?
16. With the help of angels, what will God enable you to do? 91:13

What types of things might these word pictures represent?

- ♥ 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?

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

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

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

- ♥ 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?
- ♥ 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**?

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?

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?