

MY
REFUGE
AND
MY
FORTRESS

Bible
Reading
Plan



'MY REFUGE AND MY FORTRESS' (Ps 91:2).
Security and Safety in God: A Bible Reading Plan



CHRIST CHURCH AYIA NAPA

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Intro

The need for security is essential to human existence. We cannot experience confidence or peace if we are uncertain whether our lives will remain stable and safe. Yet, the world around us appears chaotic, unpredictable, and even dangerous. Accidents happen, unexpected tragedies strike, and at times, it feels as though life is ruled by randomness. Such uncertainty can be deeply discouraging.

God offers us a profound sense of safety and security without which we would be unable to step outside without fear. This reading plan explores that security, beginning with short passages of encouragement that affirm God's presence and protection. As the plan progresses, we move from these assurances into longer, more troubling stories of distress because life itself follows this pattern. Despite believing in God, we still encounter suffering and loss.

The journey reaches its climax in the crucifixion of Jesus, the moment when all security seems lost. And yet, from this place of ultimate disorientation, we turn to a 'new song' (Psalm 96), finding renewed faith in the One we have trusted despite our past experiences [This structure is inspired by Walter Brueggemann's framework of Psalms of orientation, disorientation, and reorientation, reflecting the reality of our spiritual journey].

We hope this resource will be a blessing to you, helping you grow in faith and find renewed strength and solid ground in times of trouble.

This Bible plan was thoughtfully woven together and developed by the participants of the regular Bible study at Christ Church Ayia Napa during the autumn of 2024.

- **Day 1:**

Psalm 91:1-6

Isaiah 41:10

- **Day 2:**

Psalm 40:2

Jeremiah 29:11

- **Day 3:**

Psalm 119:117

Deuteronomy 31:8

- **Day 4:**

Psalm 91:7-16

Proverbs 29:25, 30:5

- **Day 5:**

Psalm 22:1-5

Genesis 16:1-16, 21:9-21

- **Day 6:**

Ps 22:12-18

2 Samuel 13:1-22

- **Day 7:**

Psalm 22:6-11

Mark 15:25-41

- **Day 8:**

Psalm 96:1-6

2 Timothy 1:8-14

Day 1

Psalm 91:1-6

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.' 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. 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.

Isaiah 41:10

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Reflection

In times of uncertainty or fear, these passages remind us that God offers true refuge and protection. Psalm 91:1-6 assures us that when we dwell in God's presence, He shields us from harm and watches over us with faithfulness. Similarly, Isaiah 41:10 calls us to trust in God's promise to strengthen and uphold us, even in our weakest moments. Our response to these truths should be to find our peace in His care, letting go of anxiety and resting in the security that God is always with us, ready to deliver and protect. These promises invite us to step forward with confidence, knowing that our safety is not found in the absence of danger, but in God's constant presence and love.

Day 2

Psalm 40:2

He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.

Jeremiah 29:11

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Reflection

These readings remind us that no matter how deep our struggles, God is always ready to rescue and restore us. They reassure us that God has a good plan for our lives, a plan filled with hope and a future. These readings invite us to trust in God's timing and purpose, knowing that He is always at work behind the scenes, leading us toward something better. Our response should be to remain hopeful and patient, trusting that, even when we don't see the way forward, God is preparing a path that leads to our ultimate good.

Day 3

Psalm 119:117

Uphold me, and I shall be delivered; I will always have regard for your decrees.

Deuteronomy 31:8

The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.

Reflection

The psalmist prays for God to uphold him so he may live, trusting that God's word provides the stability and strength needed to endure. Similarly, in Deut. 31:8, God assures His people that He will never leave or forsake them, providing courage and confidence as they face the unknown. These passages remind us that our security is not based on our own strength or understanding, but on God's constant support and faithful presence. Our response should be to trust Him fully, knowing that His guidance and protection are unwavering, no matter the challenges we face.

Day 4

Psalm 91:7-16

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. 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... 'Because he loves me,' says the Lord, 'I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.'

Proverbs 29:25, 30:5

Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe. <...> Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.

Reflection

God's protection is not the absence of danger but His presence in the midst of it. Psalm 91:7-16 assures us that even when destruction surrounds us, we remain secure if we trust in Him. Proverbs 29:25 warns that fearing man enslaves, while trusting God brings true safety. Proverbs 30:5 declares His Word flawless, a shield for the faithful. Security is not found in control but in surrender, not in strength but in refuge. To trust God is to rest under His unfailing protection.

Day 5

Psalm 22:1-5

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish? My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, but I find no rest. Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the one Israel praises. In you our ancestors put their trust; they trusted and you delivered them. To you they cried out and were saved; in you they trusted and were not put to shame.

Genesis 16:1-16, 21:9-21

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, bore him no children. She had an Egyptian slave-girl whose name was Hagar, and Sarai said to Abram, 'You see that the Lord has prevented me from bearing children; go in to my slave-girl; it may be that I shall obtain children by her.' And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. So, after Abram had lived for ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her slave-girl, and gave her to her husband Abram as a wife. He went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. Then Sarai said to Abram, 'May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my slave-girl to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the Lord judge between you and me!' But Abram said to Sarai, 'Your slave-girl is in your power; do to her as you please.' Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she ran away from her.

The angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. And he said, 'Hagar, slave-girl of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?' She said, 'I am running away from

my mistress Sarai.' The angel of the Lord said to her, 'Return to your mistress, and submit to her.' The angel of the Lord also said to her, 'I will so greatly multiply your offspring that they cannot be counted for multitude.'

And the angel of the Lord said to her,

'Now you have conceived and shall bear a son;

you shall call him Ishmael,

for the Lord has given heed to your affliction.

He shall be a wild donkey of a man,

with his hand against everyone,

and everyone's hand against him;

and he shall live at odds with all his kin.'

So she named the Lord who spoke to her, 'You are El-roi'; for she said,

'Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing him?' Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; it lies between Kadesh and Bered.

Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.

<...> But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac. So she said to Abraham, 'Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit along with my son Isaac.' The matter was very distressing to Abraham on account of his son. But God said to Abraham, 'Do not be distressed because of the boy and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be named after you. As for the son of the slave woman, I will make a nation of him also, because he is your offspring.' So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her

shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed, and wandered about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba.

When the water in the skin was gone, she cast the child under one of the bushes. Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot; for she said, 'Do not let me look on the death of the child.' And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept. And God heard the voice of the boy; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, 'What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid; for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. Come, lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make a great nation of him.' Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. She went, and filled the skin with water, and gave the boy a drink.

God was with the boy, and he grew up; he lived in the wilderness, and became an expert with the bow. He lived in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother got a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

Reflection

The Word of God speaks of protection and deliverance, yet life often feels more fragile. The psalmist cries, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (Ps. 22:1), echoing our own moments of despair. Hagar, abandoned in the wilderness, believed she and her son would die (Gen. 21:15-16). We, too, face times when God's promises seem distant. Yet, in our desolation, the Lord sees us. God sent an angel to Hagar, providing water and hope. He did not erase her suffering, but met her in it. Life is not always soft or simple, but the God finds us in the desert, giving strength for a troublesome journey.

Day 6

Ps 22:12-18

Many bulls surround me; strong bulls of Bashan encircle me. Roaring lions that tear their prey open their mouths wide against me. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted within me. My mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. Dogs surround me, a pack of villains encircles me; they pierce my hands and my feet. All my bones are on display; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.

2 Samuel 13:1-22

David's son Absalom had a beautiful sister whose name was Tamar; and David's son Amnon fell in love with her. Amnon was so tormented that he made himself ill because of his sister Tamar, for she was a virgin and it seemed impossible to Amnon to do anything to her. But Amnon had a friend whose name was Jonadab, the son of David's brother Shimeah; and Jonadab was a very crafty man. He said to him, 'O son of the king, why are you so haggard morning after morning? Will you not tell me?' Amnon said to him, 'I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister.' Jonadab said to him, 'Lie down on your bed, and pretend to be ill; and when your father comes to see you, say to him, "Let my sister Tamar come and give me something to eat, and prepare the food in my sight, so that I may see it and eat it from her hand."' So Amnon lay down, and pretended to be ill; and when the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king, 'Please let my sister Tamar come and make a couple of cakes in my sight, so that I may eat from her hand.'

Then David sent home to Tamar, saying, 'Go to your brother Amnon's house, and prepare food for him.' So Tamar went to her brother Amnon's house, where he was lying down. She took dough, kneaded it, made cakes in his sight, and baked the cakes. Then she took the pan and set them out before him, but he refused to eat. Amnon said, 'Send out everyone from me.' So everyone went out from him. Then Amnon said to Tamar, 'Bring the food into the chamber, so that I may eat from your hand.' So Tamar took the cakes she had made, and brought them into the chamber to Amnon her brother. But when she brought them near him to eat, he took hold of her, and said to her, 'Come, lie with me, my sister.' She answered him, 'No, my brother, do not force me; for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do anything so vile! As for me, where could I carry my shame? And as for you, you would be as one of the scoundrels in Israel. Now therefore, I beg you, speak to the king; for he will not withhold me from you.' But he would not listen to her; and being stronger than she was, he forced her and lay with her.

Then Amnon was seized with a very great loathing for her; indeed, his loathing was even greater than the lust he had felt for her. Amnon said to her, 'Get out!' But she said to him, 'No, my brother; for this wrong in sending me away is greater than the other that you did to me.' But he would not listen to her. He called the young man who served him and said, 'Put this woman out of my presence, and bolt the door after her.' (Now she was wearing a long robe with sleeves; for this is how the virgin daughters of the king were clothed in earlier times.) So his servant put her out, and bolted the door after her. But Tamar put ashes on her head, and tore the long robe that she was wearing; she put her hand on her head, and went away, crying aloud as she went.

Her brother Absalom said to her, 'Has Amnon your brother been with you? Be quiet for now, my sister; he is your brother; do not take this to heart.' So Tamar remained, a desolate woman, in her brother Absalom's house. When King David heard of all these things, he became very angry, but he would not punish his son Amnon, because he loved him, for he was his firstborn. But Absalom spoke to Amnon neither good nor bad; for Absalom hated Amnon, because he had raped his sister Tamar.

Reflection

The Bible tells us that God is our protector, yet these passages lay bare the darkest realities of human suffering. Psalm 22:12-18 paints a picture of utter abandonment surrounded by enemies, stripped of dignity, reduced to dust. And then there's Tamar, violated and discarded (2 Sam. 13:1-22), her cries met with silence, her life shattered by cruelty. Where was God when she wept? Where is He when the innocent suffer? We want to believe in His justice, yet too often, the wicked prosper while the broken remain unheard. If God is near to the crushed in spirit, why does He sometimes feel so far away? Somehow, in the silence, He is still present. Yet the questions remain, heavy and unresolved.

Day 7

Psalm 22:6-11

But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by everyone, despised by the people. All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads. 'He trusts in the Lord,' they say, 'let the Lord rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him.' Yet you brought me out of the womb; you made me trust in you, even at my mother's breast. From birth I was cast on you; from my mother's womb you have been my God. Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help.

Mark 15:25-41

It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified Jesus. The inscription of the charge against him read, 'The King of the Jews.' And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, 'Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!' In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, 'He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe.' Those who were crucified with him also taunted him.

When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, 'Listen, he is calling for Elijah.' And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick,

and gave it to him to drink, saying, 'Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.' Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, 'Truly this man was God's Son!'

There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.

Reflection

Jesus, in His agony, cries, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?". On the cross, He enters the depths of human suffering, bearing our pain, trauma, and abandonment. "I am a worm and not a man" — He becomes despised, yet in doing so, He embraces all who feel forgotten. His crucifixion is the ultimate act of self-giving love, His suffering the deepest empathy. But suffering is not the end. The resurrection transforms wounds into victory, showing that even the darkest trauma can be overcome in God's redeeming light. Hope prevails.

Day 8

Psalm 96:1-6

Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples. For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord made the heavens. Splendour and majesty are before him; strength and glory are in his sanctuary."

2 Timothy 1:8-14

Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. For this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher, and for this reason I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know the one in whom I have put my trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that day what I have entrusted to him. Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.

Reflection

Psalm 96 calls us to sing a new song, rejoicing in God’s splendor. Yet, 2 Timothy 1:8-14 reminds us that faith often leads through suffering. When darkness comes, when we feel disoriented, we hold fast to “the one in whom we have believed” (2 Tim. 1:12). Love for God carries us beyond fear, beyond shame, into renewed trust. Christ’s victory reorients our lives, turning despair into courage, loss into steadfast hope. So we sing—not because life is easy, but because God is faithful.