Psalm 91 Bible study

Psalm 91:1-16. 3 sessions of about 45 minutes, or one longer session. For small groups and personal study.

Psalm 91 calls readers to trust the LORD as refuge and protector. Its closing promise includes being with a person in trouble, not only deliverance from it. When the devil quotes its words about angels in Matthew 4, Jesus refuses to put God to the test. Read the psalm as confidence in God's care, not as a technique for becoming immune to danger, illness, or loss.

READ TOGETHER: PSALM 91:1-16

1 He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. 2 I will say
to the LORD, “You are my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.” 3 Surely He will deliver
you from the snare of the fowler, and from the deadly plague. 4 He will cover you with His feathers;
under His wings you will find refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and rampart. 5 You will not fear the
terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, 6 nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor
the calamity that destroys at noon. 7 Though a thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at
your right hand, no harm will come near you. 8 You will only see it with your eyes and witness the
punishment of the wicked. 9 Because you have made the LORD your dwelling— my refuge, the Most
High— 10 no evil will befall you, no plague will approach your tent. 11 For He will command His
angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. 12 They will lift you up in their hands, so that
you will not strike your foot against a stone. 13 You will tread on the lion and cobra; you will trample
the young lion and serpent. 14 “Because he loves Me, I will deliver him; because he knows My name,
I will protect him. 15 When he calls out to Me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble. I will
deliver him and honor him. 16 With long life I will satisfy him and show him My salvation.”

Scripture from the Berean Standard Bible (BSB), public domain.

BACKGROUND

A poem of confidence

The opening names shelter, shadow, refuge, and fortress. The images invite trust in the LORD's character. The poem then speaks into fears of night and day, disease and violence, before closing with a divine promise in verses 14 to 16.

Tyndale's introductory note on Psalm 91 calls it a wisdom psalm expressing confidence in the Almighty. Its note on 91:5-8 cautions: "These promises do not guarantee an escape from trouble, but they create an expectation of the Lord's goodness." Keep that caution beside the poem's strong language rather than replacing the poem with it.

Read the psalm with Jesus' answer

In Matthew 4:5-7, the devil quotes Psalm 91:11-12 while urging Jesus to throw himself from the temple. Jesus answers with the prohibition against putting God to the test. Knowing a promise does not authorize creating a danger to demand proof that God will act.

Tyndale's note on Psalm 91:11 points to this temptation account. For the group, compare the uses of Scripture directly. Trust can include seeking shelter, taking reasonable precautions, and receiving help. This guide does not advise stopping treatment or taking a physical risk to prove faith.

Then the devil took Him to the holy city and set Him on the pinnacle of the temple. "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.' " Jesus replied, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' " (Matthew 4:5-7)

FROM REFUGE TO THE VOICE OF PROMISE

Follow the images and the changes of voice before applying any one sentence.

Shelter and trust (91:1-2)

The opening picture is of dwelling with the Most High. Verse 2 turns to a personal confession of trust. Start by asking who is trusted, rather than treating the words as an object that protects by being repeated.

Wings and a shield (91:3-4)

The poem joins the warmth of shelter under wings with the strength of a shield. These are images of care and defense. They do not describe God as a physical bird or supply a picture of his body.

Night and day (91:5-8)

The dangers fill both darkness and daylight. Notice their range and the poem's assurance. Do not use the contrast to conclude that people harmed by war or disease must lack faith.

Angels and the temptation (91:9-13)

The promise of angelic protection is the wording used in Matthew 4. Jesus' response helps distinguish reliance on God from an attempt to force God to demonstrate protection.

With him in trouble (91:14-16)

The final speaker promises to answer, accompany, deliver, and honor. Trouble still appears inside the promise. Read the expectation of salvation and life across this whole ending rather than isolating one line as an individual timetable.

SESSION 1 OF 3

Where trust rests

Read Psalm 91:1-4. Notice how the images direct attention to the LORD rather than to a protective ritual.

Observe: what does the text say?

1. What images of shelter and protection appear in verses 1 to 4?

2. Where does a statement about a person dwelling with God become a personal statement of trust?

Interpret: what did it mean then?

3. What do the fortress and wings images each contribute to the picture of care?

4. Why would treating the psalm as a set of protective words miss the object of trust named in verse 2?

Apply: what does it mean for us?

5. Choose one image to shape a short prayer about a real concern.

6. What practical help could you receive while trusting God, rather than treating receiving help as failure?

SESSION 2 OF 3

Fear, promises, and testing

Read Psalm 91:5-13. Compare the protection language with the temptation account without ignoring the seriousness of danger.

Also read: Matthew 4:5-7.

Observe: what does the text say?

1. List the dangers named across night and day. What range of fears do they describe?

2. What do verses 11 and 12 say about angels? Read those lines alongside Matthew 4:5-7.

Interpret: what did it mean then?

3. How does Jesus' answer distinguish trusting a promise from testing God?

4. Why should these verses not become a way to judge the faith of someone who becomes ill or is harmed?

Apply: what does it mean for us?

5. What would a responsible precaution look like in a situation where you are tempted to demand proof of protection?

6. How could you comfort someone using the psalm without promising an outcome you cannot guarantee?

SESSION 3 OF 3

Presence in trouble

Read Psalm 91:14-16. Read God's closing words as a whole, including the promise of presence during trouble.

Observe: what does the text say?

1. List the actions the LORD promises in these three verses.

2. Which phrase acknowledges that trouble can still be present?

Interpret: what did it mean then?

3. How does verse 15 help you read the earlier protection language?

4. How is the language of long life and salvation different from a prediction of one person's lifespan?

Apply: what does it mean for us?

5. Name a way your group can accompany someone in trouble this week.

6. Write a prayer that asks for rescue while also asking for help to trust and receive care during the waiting.

ONE-SESSION PATH

Psalm 91 in one evening

Read all of Psalm 91:1-16. About 45 to 60 minutes.

Observe: what does the text say?

1. Read the whole psalm aloud. List its shelter images.

2. Which actions are promised in verses 14 to 16?

Interpret: what did it mean then?

3. Read Matthew 4:5-7. How does Jesus respond to the use of this psalm?

4. What is the difference between trust and testing in a real decision?

5. How does the promise of presence in trouble shape the way you explain protection?

Apply: what does it mean for us?

6. Choose one line for prayer and one responsible action to take this week.

7. How can the group support a person who has suffered without questioning their faith?

FOR THE LEADER

- Session 1 should stay with the named object of trust. A printed verse, repeated prayer, or displayed image is not presented by the psalm as an independent protective device.
- For session 2, read Matthew 4 itself, not a remembered version of the story. The devil quotes the promise; Jesus answers by refusing to test God. The comparison gives the group a concrete interpretive check.
- For session 3, point to the words about being with the person in trouble. Do not offer an explanation for why a particular accident, illness, or death happened.
- If a participant is grieving, allow them to pass on an application question. Do not suggest that precautions, medical treatment, or professional care show weak faith.
- Keep the promise strong enough to be heard as trust in God's goodness, while refusing to turn it into an individual guarantee of immunity. The aim is prayerful confidence, not a prediction.

WHERE CHRISTIANS READ IT DIFFERENTLY

Are the promises direct guarantees for every situation?

One reading emphasizes their broad assurance and expects concrete deliverance. Another emphasizes the wisdom-poem form and reads them alongside other biblical accounts of faithful suffering. Tyndale's note on 91:5-8 rejects treating them as a guarantee of escaping trouble. The presence promised in 91:15 and Jesus' refusal to test God in Matthew 4 should govern application.

Does the promise of long life set a minimum lifespan?

Verse 16 celebrates life and salvation as God's gifts. Tyndale's note reads earthly long life within the larger horizon of the LORD's goodness and lasting friendship. The verse does not supply a number or a timetable. This study does not interpret a short life as proof of deficient love or faith.

SOURCES

Psalm 91, Berean Standard Bible. Berean Bible. Public domain. Full primary passage, images, and closing promises.

Matthew 4:5-7, Berean Standard Bible. Berean Bible. Public domain. Primary account of the quotation of Psalm 91 and Jesus' response.

Tyndale Open Study Notes, Psalm 91. Tyndale House Publishers. CC BY-SA 4.0. Introductory note on Psalm 91 and on 91:5-8, 11, and 14-16; protection, testing, and long life.

Protos study editorial. Protos. CC BY-SA 4.0. Study structure, questions, leader guidance, and applications; outside theological review not claimed.

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The full study, with links to the commentary and dictionary, is free at protos-app.com/study-guides/psalm-91. Protos is a Bible app for iPhone and Android that puts the history and context beside the passage you are reading.