



PRAYING IN A TIME OF DEADLY DISEASE, DISASTER AND SOCIAL DISTANCING

Psalm 91 (NLT)

1 Those who live in the shelter of the Most High will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

2 This I declare about the Lord:
He alone is my refuge, my place of safety;
he is my God, and I trust him.

3 For he will rescue you from every trap
and protect you from deadly disease.

4 He will cover you with his feathers.
He will shelter you with his wings.

His faithful promises are your armor and
protection.

5 Do not be afraid of the terrors of the night,
nor the arrow that flies in the day.

6 Do not dread the disease that stalks in darkness,
nor the disaster that strikes at midday.

7 Though a thousand fall at your side,
though ten thousand are dying around you,
these evils will not touch you.

8 Just open your eyes,

and see how the wicked are punished.

9 If you make the Lord your refuge,
if you make the Most High your shelter,
10 no evil will conquer you;
no plague will come near your home.

11 For he will order his angels
to protect you wherever you go.

12 They will hold you up with their hands
so you won't even hurt your foot on a stone.

13 You will trample upon lions and cobras;
you will crush fierce lions and serpents under your
feet!

14 The Lord says, "I will rescue those who love me.
I will protect those who trust in my name.

15 When they call on me, I will answer;
I will be with them in trouble.
I will rescue and honor them.

16 I will reward them with a long life
and give them my salvation."

"Lord, teach us to pray." (Read Luke 11:1-13)

When Jesus's disciples asked him that question, he taught them four things about prayer:

The **WHAT** to pray for (the petitions and declarations of the The Lord's Prayer: "Hallowed be Thy name, Thy Kingdom Come.... etc" - Luke 11:2-4),

The **HOW** to pray (persistently, doggedly, importunately - Luke 11:5-10).

The **WHO*** to pray with (The Lord's Prayer is an "us" prayer) and

The **CONFIDENCE** we may have that God is more eager to hear and answer prayer than we are to pray (Luke 11:9-13).

These ingredients of prayer are timelessly and universally true for God's people. Today we might attach an asterisk to the WHO part. How do we pray together in a time of the scattering and isolation of people in lockdown and social distancing? We're figuring this out as we go, but one way is this prayer guide. It can be a way we all at SBCC though separated, can pray the same things together. Here's how:

Make a divine appointment.

Set aside 15 minutes a day to pray this psalm with, though probably not simultaneously, your church family. Treat it with the same seriousness you would any other appointment, but more so, since the appointment is with God.

Become a student of prayer.

The desire to pray is natural, the ability to pray is learned. 90% of learning to pray is just showing up. Find a quiet place and time and ask the Holy Spirit to teach you how to pray. Jesus said the Spirit is like the wind - He can't be controlled or managed. That's the truth, but someone added that even though we can't control the wind, we can spread our sails. Showing up to be still and pray is like spreading spiritual sails.

Practice the 4 R's:

REFLECT. Read the psalm through 2 or 3 times, asking the Spirit to highlight a word or phrase by making it "shimmer" on the page. repeat it to yourself and ask the Lord what he wants you to understand and do. Then ask yourself 3 questions:

REJOICE. What do I find here that gives me pause to rejoice, give thanks and praise God. Then do it!

REPENT. What do I read here that brings to light sin in my life? Then confess and repent.

REQUEST. What in this psalm informs the way I can pray for others, myself and the world, especially the current COVID-19 situation.

Marinate in the Psalm.

Soak in it. Let its truth get into you. That's why we're suggesting that you pray the psalm daily for a week. Charles Spurgeon said of the presence of God's word in John Bunyan's soul: "Prick him anywhere, his blood is bibline." Make that kind of thing your goal.

A Word about Psalm 91

Satan misquoted a line of Psalm 91 to tempt Jesus to presumption (see Matthew 4:1-11). The promises of Psalm 91 are meant to engender trust, not presumption. Like all genuine prayer, their purpose is not to get God to give us what we want when we want, but to trust him to give us what he wants, and in the manner and time he wants. The psalm is a pointed reminder of the spiritual battle this time of deadly disease and disaster really is. It is a far more serious matter than a rogue virus. From the earliest days of the church, Psalm 91 was one of the very few psalms almost all agreed should be prayed every day. It has also been a very appropriate psalm to pray at a funeral service.