

# “God is Our Protector”

Flash Theology | Week Three | Newbreak Church

May 21st, 2023

Newbreak’s Sermon Study Guide is an in-house resource that serves sermon-based Life Groups and/or individuals who want to reflect further on how the message contributes to our spiritual formation.

In this week’s study, we continue our sermon series *Flash Theology*, based on the book. Here we talk about how God is our “protector” and what that means for our lives. What promises can we hold to? How do we make sense of these in light of the tragedies and hardships we still face?

## Icebreakers for Life Groups

- What was a childhood fear you had? For example, did you fear the Boogeyman? What was it for you?
- What is a fear you are working on handing over to the Lord?

## Going Deeper Into the Message

*When I need help, what does God promise?*

**Read Psalm 121:1–2**

**Point 1 – God promises to enter into my mess.**

Psalm 121 is a “Psalm of Ascent” which speaks to a category of Psalms that were to be sung as Jews made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. So, when David writes the lyrics about looking up “the hills,” he would be thinking about Jerusalem. Jerusalem was on a hill in comparison to its surrounding areas. In the ancient world, high places were the desired place to place a temple because it was believed that the “gods” lived “up there” in the skies, the heavens. So, to have a temple in a “high place” was to put it closer to the “gods.” As David encouraged those who read the Psalm, especially the ancient Jews reading/singing it, he was pointing them to consider the high places—but not as their source of hope—only God can be our helper.

When David then calls upon God for help in the valley as he ascends the hill, he is saying that he can invoke God's name to come to his aid and meet him right where he is.

When fears **arise**, where are your **eyes**?

Where we look to—more specifically, who we look to tells us a lot about our theology. If we believe God will enter into the messiness of our lives and the trouble we inevitably walk through, then this Psalm is for us!

### Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- When hardships come, do you naturally lean to God for help? Or do you turn to a mode of self-sufficiency? It's not about what you are aspiring to do, but what is real at the moment. Honesty helps us grow!
- We are talking about God being our help in times of need. It might be easy to take for granted that God is "all-powerful" (omnipotent). In your own words, what does it mean that God *truly is* "all-powerful"?
- Are you comfortable asking God to enter into your mess with you? What would help you be able to do this more often?

*When I need help, what does God promise?*

**Read Psalm 121:3–4; Numbers 6:24–26**

#### **Point 2 – God promises to protect me.**

It's deeply encouraging to realize that God is our protector, but there are some caveats. The power of these verses is not that nothing perceivably bad will happen to us. Even the ancient Israelites would have had the common sense (and life experience!) to know that was not the case. God's care and protection are real, even if they don't take the shape we might hope or expect.

Notice that God doesn't promise to protect us from pain, but protects us through the pain.

→ We oftentimes want God to deliver us FROM all bad things, but that's not how life works.

The Lord will **rescue** me from every evil attack and will bring me **safely** to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen. (2 Timothy 4:18 NIV)

Think about Paul's words in 2 Timothy 4:18 (above). He wrote this when his martyrdom was imminent. Death was coming for him. *He knew it*. And what was his consolation? That he would be brought "safely" into God's kingdom even through death! Our worst fear—death—is a comma, not a period.

Consider also **Psalm 23:4**: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me." A shepherd is a protector, responsible to guard and guide helpless sheep. Jesus alluded to himself as our shepherd (see John 10). So Psalm 23 is teaching that even death cannot impede God's protection! He is our protector even through death; that's how faithful he is! We don't go around the dark valleys; he leads us through them (Psalm 23:4). And in the end, we traverse through death itself; so Jesus shepherds us even through death, since he knows the way through.

Our protector (Jesus) has been through death, so he can guard and guide us through that dark and mysterious unknown to life beyond the grave. He is a protector above and beyond anyone else in the world. "The LORD keeps watch over you as you come and go, both now and forever" (Ps. 121:8 NLT).

In all of this, it is imperative to know that God's faithfulness and protection have not failed us if we pass into death. After all, as we have said, God's faithfulness carries us through death onto the shores of heaven.

### Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- How have you seen God's protection in your own life?
- In what ways do you need God's practical protection in your life right now?
- How does God's protection—even beyond death—bring comfort to you? How does Paul's example (2 Timothy 4:8) serve as an encouragement?
- Do you fear death, or do you see it as a transition to eternity with Christ?

**—FINAL CHALLENGE QUESTIONS—**

How are you going to think or live differently in light of what you have read, heard, and discussed this week?

How does this week's message shape or nurture your relationship with God?

**BONUS:** For those of you with kids or around kids: What is one truth from this message that you can share with your kids in a way that they would relate to or understand?