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A publication of , the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- 1 What from Sunday's message interested you? ...made sense to you? ...confused you? ...intrigued you? ...upset you? ...encouraged you? ...and **why**?

- 2 In Psalm 91:1-2 we find **four metaphors for security** and **four divine names**. Let's study them!

1 He who abides in 1 of the 1, will abide in the 2 of the 2.

2 I will say to 3, "My 3 and my 4, my 4, in whom I trust!"

Write the correct **metaphor for security** or **divine name** below, and then discuss its significance:

<p>1 _____</p> <p>2 _____</p> <p>3 _____</p> <p>4 _____</p>	<p>1 _____</p> <p>2 _____</p> <p>3 _____</p> <p>4 _____</p>
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- 3 Whereas in v. 1-2 the psalmist was speaking **personally** ("I will say to Yahweh, 'My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust!'"), in v. 3-13, all the pronouns become about **us** ("you/your")! List and discuss all of the **categories** of dangers in which believers are protected.

- 4 Which of those types of dangers have you encountered? Tell us a bit about your experience.

- 5 In the final stanza (v. 14-16), the voice changes—as evidenced by the quotation marks: God speaks. God pledges his on-going care—but notice that it is **in response to** three actions on **our** part:

v. 14a "Because he has _____ Me, therefore I will protect him."

v. 14b "I will set him securely on high, because he has _____."

v. 15 "He will _____ Me, and I will answer him."

- 6 List the eight responses God pledges to those who love him, know him, and call upon him:

<p>1. _____</p> <p>2. _____</p> <p>3. _____</p> <p>4. _____</p>	<p>5. _____</p> <p>6. _____</p> <p>7. _____</p> <p>8. _____</p>
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- 7 **How much** do you "love God, know him, and call upon him"?

- 1 A standard, soft-ball question designed to get discussion going. Don't take too long on this, however... Pay attention, however, to any strong negative responses or major areas of confusion. Take note, and make plans to grab coffee and talk further.

2 **Metaphors of security and their significance:**

- 1 "shelter" — a location where one can dwell, implying protection from a danger
- 2 "shadow" — protection from searing heat. See Isaiah 25:4 and 32:2.
- 3 "refuge" — safety and freedom from danger as a result of finding shelter
- 4 "fortress" — a walled construction built as a defensive position

Divine names and their significance:

- 1 "Most High" — a title for the true God with a focus on him being supreme and of the highest status
- 2 "Almighty" — a title for the true God, with focus on his power to fulfill promises of blessing
- 3 "Yahweh" — the **name** of the one true God, with a focus on his self existence and relationship to his covenant people
- 4 "My God" — a general term "God", but it is made intimate by the possessive, as "**my** God"

- 3 **Versatile protection** Most of these dangers are of a kind which strike unseen, against which the strong are as helpless as the weak. Some, like the snare of the fowler (v. 3), are obviously metaphors for the plots which would entangle our affairs (cf. Psalm 140:1–5) or compromise our loyalty (119:110). Others are ills that attack the mind (v. 5a) or the body, by human or non-human agency (v. 5b, 6). **God's care** combines the warm protectiveness of a parent bird (v. 4; cf. Deut. 32:11; Matt. 23:37) with the hard, unyielding strength of armor (v. 4b). "Shield and buckler" gave respectively the cover that was large and static, and small and mobile.

Individual protection "You" is emphatic: 'to you it will not draw near'. This is, of course, a statement of exact, minute providence, not a promise of no adversity. Compare to the promise of Romans 8:28, assuring us that nothing can touch God's servant but by God's leave; equally (8) that no rebel can escape his retribution.

Miraculous protection (v. 11-13) God promises that angelic help will be sent when needed; Satan perverts this into a test of God (Matt. 4:11; Luke 22:43).

- 4 You likely will need to "prime the pump", so be prepared with your own answer to this question. (But wait for others to think and answer. Check your watch—20 seconds feels like an eternity!)

- 5 v. 14a *"Because he has **loved Me**, therefore I will protect him."*
v. 14b *"I will set him securely on high, because he has **known Me**"*
v. 15 *"He will **call upon Me**, and I will answer him."*

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- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. deliver him | 5. rescue him |
| 2. set him securely on high | 6. honor him |
| 3. answer him | 7. satisfy him with a long life |
| 4. be with him in trouble | 8. let him see my salvation |

- 7 You likely will need to "prime the pump", so be prepared with your own answer to this question. Be careful—folks (you included) typically tend toward one extreme or another when evaluating their love and responsiveness toward God: either we despair and are pessimistic (because our love for God is not absolute or perfected) or else we glibly ignore any warning signs of worldliness. Also be aware of the fact that your group may be composed both of believers and of non-believers. The Book of 1 John is written so that people can know if they have eternal life (1 John 5:13). It strikes the perfect balance (which should be no surprise, since God inspired it!). On the one hand, we all must admit that we still have sin in our lives (1 John 1:8-10), but on the other hand, it warns against false profession of faith (*"If we **say...and yet...**"*— see 1 John 1:6, 8, 10; 2:4, 6, 9; and 4:20).

Sermon Summary (Key Text: Psalm 91)

As we walk through life we face some very difficult times. These challenges begin early in life and, unfortunately, continue into adulthood. They can be stressful and disorienting. No matter how savvy you are, how much you plan, or how successful you become, there's no way to stop them from coming into your life. Psalm 91 gives us insight into **how our hearts can be at peace** even in the midst of very difficult circumstances. It begins with a remarkable promise—a promise we have to enter into, but also one we must be careful not to misunderstand.

The promise (vv 1-4): The psalmist paints an image of God as a shelter for us, like a shade from the scorching heat of the sun. God is our refuge. He will protect us like an impenetrable fortress. The most vivid image is that of a mother bird, protecting her young by spreading her wings over them. This image of God, seen throughout the Bible, conveys **strength and protection, tenderness and love**. The promise is for all who are in a covenant relationship with God. If that describes you, then you have a promise from God that He will protect you.

Don't misunderstand the promise (vv 5-12): When we read the middle part of this psalm, it seems to suggest that, if you trust God, He will protect you from experiencing any violence—"All I have to do is trust God, and life will be smooth sailing." As much as we would like this to be true, there is ample Biblical evidence that God doesn't insulate us from life's problems (remember Job?). Satan would love for us to misread this passage and believe that (1) if life doesn't go smoothly, we're not trusting God enough, or (2) if we trust God and still experience suffering, then God cannot be trusted. **So what is it really saying?** The story of Joseph (Genesis 37-50) helps us understand. He experienced an incredible amount of trouble and suffering, but in the end, **God** used that to mold him into a godly man and save the lives of countless people. In fact, Romans 8:28 tells us that God works everything (good and bad) together to make us grow into mature Christians. The broad teaching of Scripture is that, while painful things **will** happen to us, ultimately our lives are in God's hands; we are **immortal** until our work on earth is done. He will not allow us to suffer one moment longer than is necessary, and that suffering is for our good. God's protection actually allows pain to touch our lives to shape us into the people He wants us to be.

Enter into the promise (vv 14-16): We know God allows trouble into our lives for good, but how can we get the power to trust Him when trouble comes our way? The key is in v. 15, "I will be with him **in** trouble." It doesn't just mean we'll feel God's presence when we suffer—much more! In Jesus, God became a human being who **experienced trouble**, and **betrayal**, and **wrongdoing**, and **injustice**. He perfectly understands and feels our suffering. In fact, He suffered **for** us. Like a mother bird, who protects her young with her own body, Jesus Christ protected us from God's judgment by substituting Himself for us on the cross. He rescued us by His suffering. We find refuge in our troubles by remembering what Jesus did for us on the cross. If He suffered for us, we also can suffer patiently, knowing that God is working all things together for our good.

Talking To Others About This Week's Message

If a neighbor or friend at work asked you, "*What kind of stuff do they talk about at your church?*", how would you summarize the most important ideas of this week's sermon and the key lessons you intend to apply to your life? Can you explain it in **plain language** anyone could understand?

Talking To God About This Week's Message

"Heavenly Father, today I want to be a 'doer' of the Word, and not just a 'hearer'. Amen."

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

**What expectations do you have for your walk with the Lord?
What "shape" does the Christian life take? You might be surprised...**

Monday— Read Philippians 2:3, and fill in these blanks:

"Do _____ from selfishness or empty conceit,
but with humility of mind regard one another as _____ important than yourselves."

How did you compare to that standard that God has for you?



Tuesday— Read Philippians 2:5. **What** attitude did Jesus Christ have? Describe it.
How much of Jesus' attitude do you exhibit?



Wednesday— Read Luke 6:40. **How much** do you resemble Christ?
Then, **how complete** is **your** discipleship training?



OK, now it's time to discover the "**shape**" that Jesus' training took. (Hint: It looks like a "J".)
Did you realize that Jesus went through training in order to develop as he did? Read Hebrews 5:8.

Thursday— Read Philippians 2:6-11. Note that Jesus **first** goes down, then **later** he goes up. Humiliation comes **before** exaltation. The cross **before** the crown. But notice too that he ends up **higher** than he started; because of his suffering he now has a name higher than any other! Just as a "**J**" goes **down** before it goes **up**, Jesus humbled himself before he was exalted. Just as a "**J**" **ends up higher than it started**, when we follow "**the J way**", **so will we!**

Friday— Observe "**the J way**" in the following verses: Romans 8:18-21, 31-39 & 2 Corinthians 4:16-18.

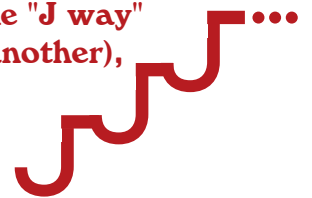
Saturday— Now, "map" some of your life experiences onto "**the J way**":

- ① = "normal" life
- ② = God brings suffering
- ③ = God exalts you



Now—ready for some "Extra Credit" work?

Since God follows up one "J way" with another (and then another), see if you can map some of your life experiences onto this...



Google a picture of a mother hen with chicks under her wings. Then, one night this week at the dinner table:

1. **Show your family the picture and read Psalm 91:1 & 4 to them:**
"Those who go to God Most High for safety will be protected by the Almighty... He will cover you with his feathers, and hide you under his wings."

2. **Then, retell Pastor Doug's story of the Yellowstone Forest Fire:**

[Summary: After the fires, park rangers walked through the charred forest inspecting the damage. At the base of a burned stump, they saw a mother bird, burned and dead, still sitting upright in her nest. Nudging her with a stick, three little live chicks ran out from underneath her charred wings! Those baby chicks survived because their mother took the heat, so they wouldn't have to. She gave her life for theirs!]

3. **Discuss how Jesus "took the heat for us" so that we wouldn't have to.**