

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: <i>For Your Anxious Heart</i>	8
WEEK 1 Facing Your Fears	15
WEEK 2 Waiting While You Worship	57
WEEK 3 Lamenting with Authenticity	99
WEEK 4 Praising God Leads to Contentment	139
WEEK 5 Rekindling Exuberant Joy	175
WEEK 6 Living in Victory	217
A REVIEW OF PRACTICES TO STRENGTHEN YOUR PRAISE JOURNEY	257
GLOSSARY OF HEBREW WORDS (<i>Praise and Worship</i>)	259
LISTENING GUIDE FOR VIDEO TEACHING	261
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	267
NOTES	269

WEEK 1

FACING YOUR FEARS

WEEK 1 | DAY 1

WHEN I FEEL FEAR RISING, HOW DO I VIEW GOD?

MORNING PRAYER

Lord, You know my anxious thoughts.

*This morning, I claim the words of
the psalmist, David:*

You, LORD, are my light and my salvation.

Whom shall I fear?

*Today, let me walk in courage
and with a sense of calm.*

BASED ON PSALM 27:1

As I write this, we are living in some very wonky days! The recent COVID-19 pandemic has turned our world upside-down. Many have lost their lives, their jobs, and their security, as scientists scramble to develop a vaccine. At the same time, racial injustice, riots, and political polarization have filled the news and social media feeds. Horrific hurricanes and fire storms have raged over our planet and left many shaken to the core.

In 2016, *Time* magazine featured an article claiming that Americans are more afraid than ever.¹ Consider, that report came out long before 2020, a year that the world will never forget. Fear is a global problem, not just an American phenomenon.

The world in which the psalmists lived, though less sophisticated, was just as evil and dangerous. David had to flee for his life and hide in the wilderness for many years. Though anointed by the prophet Samuel to be the next king of Israel, David spent many years hiding from Saul, the current king, who gave orders to have David killed (1 Sam. 19:1). Imagine, a death threat! That would stir up a bit of fear, right?

This week we'll be looking at four different psalms that address the anxiety of perceived danger and fear. Today we begin with Psalm 27.

EXPLORE

READ PSALM 27 OUT LOUD

Often the Psalms will start out with the psalmist pouring out his heart to the Lord with requests. In Psalm 27, David leads right off with praise. He pours out his heart in the middle of the psalm (vv. 4–12), and then at the end he comes back to praise (vv. 13–14).

READ PSALM 27:1

David writes, “The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?”

David uses three word pictures to describe God in this first verse. List the three word pictures below. Next to each one, write a sentence describing what that word picture teaches you about God.

READ PSALM 27:2-3

Bible scholars feel David is rehearsing past experiences in these verses where he saw the Lord protect and deliver him. It is highly possible that he is reflecting on his experience of fighting Goliath.

READ 1 SAMUEL 17:26-50

Where did David's confidence come from when facing Goliath? How did this victory over Goliath impact David's faith and prepare him for future battles with fear?

READ PSALM 27:4-12

When I walked through breast cancer almost twenty years ago, anxiety and fear were constant companions. During that season I remember memorizing Psalm 27. It has become one of my favorites whenever I feel fear rising. **How many times in these verses does David reference the presence of God?**

READ PSALM 27:4

Circle the phrase “One thing” in your Bible. David could have asked for many other good gifts: protection, provision, courage, or good health. Instead, he set his focus on only one thing, God’s presence. How might an undivided heart diminish fear?

At the time David wrote this, “the House of the LORD” would have been the tabernacle where the Jewish people went to worship. In the New Testament, Paul writes that our bodies are now the place where the Spirit of God dwells.

READ PSALM 27:7-9

David cried out for the Lord to hear his heart and to answer his request. What was his request?

I love the New Living Translation of Psalm 27:8. It reads, “My heart has heard you say, ‘Come and talk with me.’ And my heart responds, ‘LORD, I am coming.’”

David viewed his relationship with God as intensely personal. He heard God’s voice, perhaps not audibly, but with ears of faith in his spirit. The Lord delights in us coming to talk with Him as well. He never tires of hearing His children cry out to Him. While we often cry out to Him in times of danger, He longs to carry on a continual conversation with us like a loving father with a child.

READ PSALM 27:10

Many have experienced abandonment from their mother, father, or in some cases both. Broken homes are often the norm. As adults the wounds we experienced in childhood can leave us wrestling with an undercurrent of anxiety. **What does this verse teach about God’s ability to heal deep wounds from childhood?**

READ PSALM 27:13-14

At the end of his psalm, David comes back to the heart of worship, writing: “Yet, I am confident that I will see the LORD’s goodness” (NLT). A worshipful heart cries out, “God is good even though life feels scary.”

*Courage is not the absence of fear.
It is taking the next step by faith,
trusting that God is good
and that He will work all things
together for our good.*

BASED ON ROMANS 8:28

SELAH—PAUSE AND REFLECT

What part does remembering God’s faithfulness in the past play in building your courage for the future?

How might using word pictures to describe God’s protection enhance your worship experience?

If you were to assign one word picture to God that best describes how safe you feel with Him, what would that word picture be?

As we look this week at the fears that create anxiety within us, what are some of the fears you wrestle with?

How might seeking the presence of God help quiet those fears?

Finish this statement based on today's lesson: When I feel fear rising I will . . .

MEMORIZE: Psalm 27:1

LISTEN: "Nothing Else" sung by Cody Carnes

POUR OUT YOUR HEART

In the space below, pour out your heart to the Lord and ask Him for strength and courage as you face fear.

EVENING PRAISE

*Lord Jesus, as I close out this day
I remain confident of Your goodness.
As I sleep, I praise You that I can remain confident
and rest secure in Your presence and power.*

BASED ON PSALM 27:13, 3

WEEK 1 | DAY 2

WHEN YOU NEED A SHELTER

MORNING PRAYER

Lord, as I begin this new day

I lift my eyes to You.

When fear and anxiety assail,

I will keep my eyes on You.

Only You can release me from the trap of fear.

BASED ON PSALM 121:1; 25:15

I'll never forget the phone call from the doctor that informed me I had breast cancer and that the safest method of treatment for me was a double mastectomy. Nothing really shakes the foundation of your core quite like the word "cancer." It becomes a haunting invisible enemy. Fear pummeled my mind in new ways. I was still in the thick of raising kids and I wondered, would I live to finish raising them?

During that season I memorized Psalm 46. Every day before my surgery, I took a long walk and recited the words of the psalmist, "God is my refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble, therefore we will not fear..." (Ps. 46:1–2). The words

of Psalm 46 allowed my imagination to form pictures of God being a refuge to me, a place to pull back and hide in the chaos of all the doctor appointments and decisions I needed to make. God's presence became so real to me during those dark days. I still often return to Psalm 46 when fear threatens to overwhelm me.

EXPLORE

READ PSALM 46 OUT LOUD

What word pictures does the psalmist give that depict the presence of God?

READ PSALM 46:4-5

Natural disasters seem to abound—earthquakes, hurricanes, fire storms, raging waters, and floods. In these verses, the writer paints a picture, in contrast to the chaos depicted by natural disasters, of a peaceful river. **What do you think the peaceful river represents?**

READ PSALM 46:6-7

In what way do these verses remind you of the political environment we face today?

Even though nations are divided and polarized, what is the comfort found in verse 7?

READ PSALM 46:8-9

When the psalmist writes about “desolations,” he is referring to terrifying events that leave us astonished. In His sovereignty, God allows horrific events. We don’t always understand why, but we do know that He promises to use even horror for good in the life of one who believes and trusts Him (Rom. 8:28). God will ultimately allow terrifying events to abolish evil. How do you think God might use catastrophic events to change the hearts of people?

READ PSALM 46:10

This is one of the most quoted verses in the Psalms. When fear terrorizes and chaos abounds, our minds are anything but still. Yet God calls us to “be still” in His presence knowing that He will be exalted over all things. **Stillness refers to a quiet trusting. It does not refer to silent worship. How might worshiping and praising God bring our hearts to a place of quiet trust?**

SELAH—PAUSE AND REFLECT

READ PSALM 46:11

The psalmist closes his song by painting a picture once again of God as a fortress. A fortress is a place built to protect. In this day where it seems the enemy of our souls is on a rampage, what does it look like for you to shelter down in God’s protecting fortress?

As you reflect on Psalm 46, which verse speaks to your own personal situation the most?

What does it mean to you personally that God is an ever-present help?

How might praising God help you understand more fully that God is your refuge and fortress?

MEMORIZE: Psalm 27:1

LISTEN: “Be Still” sung by Red Rocks Worship, Acoustic Sessions

POUR OUT YOUR HEART

Write out a prayer expressing your desire for God’s presence to calm your fears.

EVENING PRAISE

*I praise You, Lord God,
that You are my refuge and strength.*

Thank You that You are an ever-present help in times of trouble.

*I praise You as I end my day, that You will quiet my heart
and help me to rest securely in You.*

*I leave every worry and fear at Your feet,
knowing that You alone are my fortress.*

BASED ON PSALMS 46:1, 2; 4:8; 52:22

WEEK 1 | DAY 3

SHOULD I FEEL GUILTY THAT I WRESTLE WITH FEAR?

MORNING PRAYER

*Abba Father, as I begin this new day,
I ask You to guard my mind and heart.
Help me today to dwell in Your presence
and rest in Your shadow as I go through my day.
Help me to remember that You have promised
to be with me even in trouble.*

BASED ON PSALM 91:1, 15

Fear is one of the strongest tactics that Satan, our enemy, uses against God's people. While we are not to give Satan our focus, we are to be wise in understanding his antics (1 Peter 5:8). In Revelation 12:10, John writes that Satan is "the accuser of our brothers and sisters" and that he "accuses them before our God day and night."

Wow. What a job description. All Satan can do is accuse us and lie (Rev. 12:8). He takes truth and twists it to terrorize God's people and provoke them to fear.

His entire existence is wrapped up in trying to deceive people and get them to doubt God's goodness.

For example, imagine for a moment you feel fear in the middle of the night. Then you start feeling guilty for feeling fearful. You begin beating yourself up thinking, "I should trust God more. What's wrong with me?" Next thing you know you can't fall back to sleep, because now you're in a tailspin feeling not only fear, but guilt for your fear. Or maybe your kids are out driving, and it's past the hour they were to be home. Your mind starts imagining, "What if they were in a car accident? What if they're stuck in a ditch?" Your what ifs continue until, before you know it, you have your children dead and buried.

Satan uses your guilt to shame you and make you feel terrible about yourself. He also pummels your imagination with every fear and possibility he can throw at you. Soon you are living through nightmares you were never intended to live through. **The key is not to feel guilty for fear but to know the weapons that are available and use them to fight back!**

Today we're going to look at Psalm 91 and a few related passages to discover some of the weapons we can use when Satan starts with his nonsense.

EXPLORE

READ PSALM 91 OUT LOUD

In the very first verse, the psalmist uses the word Almighty to describe God. The word Almighty in the Hebrew is *shadday*. Often it appears as *El Shadday* in the Old Testament and means "God Almighty." It speaks to the mighty and unconquerable nature of God.² God is all-sufficient and all-powerful to meet any foe that comes against His children. He is all-powerful over Satan and all his shenanigans. God's sovereign power trumps every other. He is eternally able to protect His children.

READ PSALM 91:1-2

In your Bible, circle the word “dwells.” The key to quieting fear and anxiety is to dwell in God’s presence. What is the outcome the psalmist points to for those who abide in the presence of God?

In these first two verses, the three distinct names for God are used: *Elyon* (the most high God),³ *Shaddai*, (the Almighty), and *Elohim* (the supreme God).⁴

What do these names of God speak about His ability to protect and care for you and your loved ones?

What are the two word pictures the psalmist creates for us in verse 2?

READ PSALM 91:3-9

Fowlers were bird catchers before the days of guns. They used nets spread on the ground and various traps to capture all kinds of birds. The fowlers provided birds to the marketplace for sacrifice and food.⁵ When David writes, “Surely he will save

you from the fowler's snare," he is comparing the crafty fowlers to the crafty tactics of the evil one to trap and ensnare you. What types of snares or traps do people fall into when they are afraid?

Pestilence refers to attacks that come in the form of plagues. Often the enemy will use fears of sickness and illness to torment moms. Immediately following this reference, we see the "motherly" nurturing side of God. The picture of God covering us with His feathers reminds us of a mother hen spreading her wings out to protect her baby chicks.

READ PSALM 91:9

What is the condition to not being overwhelmed by fear?

READ PSALM 91:14-16

Even though the child of God is not promised a life free from sorrow or suffering, what is promised here?

SELAH—PAUSE AND REFLECT

What images did you grow up with about God?

How does Psalm 91 paint a different picture?

When you imagine God covering you with His wings, how does that make you feel?

Friend, the next time you feel guilty for feeling fear, shift your focus. Rather than beating yourself up because you're not braver or stronger, start worshiping your God who is bigger, stronger, and more amazing than any enemy you face.

MEMORIZE: Psalm 27:1

LISTEN: “Psalm 91 (On Eagles’ Wings)” sung by Shane & Shane

POUR OUT YOUR HEART

Take a portion of Psalm 91 that especially resonates with you and write out a prayer based on those words.

EVENING PRAISE

*Lord, I praise You that You are El Shadday,
the God who is Almighty.*

*Thank You that I don't have to live in bondage to fear.
I praise You that You are my refuge and that Your faithfulness
surrounds me as I sleep.*

BASED ON PSALM 91:1, 9