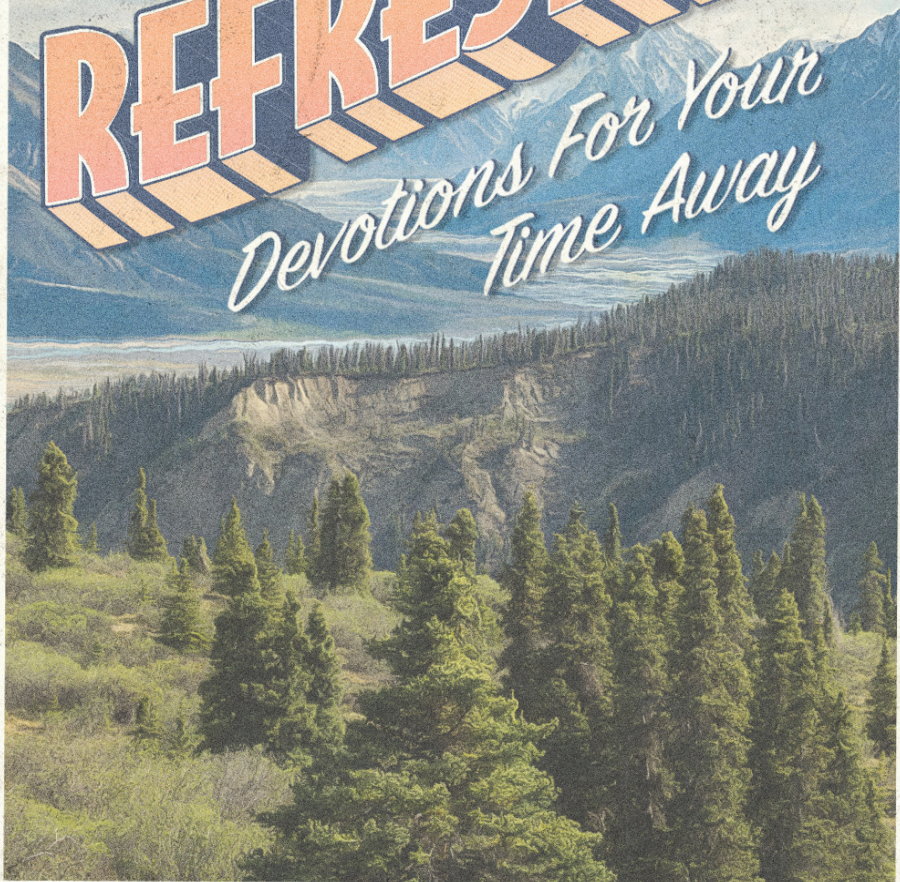


John Hindley

REFRESHED

*Devotions For Your
Time Away*



INTRODUCTION

Refreshed. Restored. Revitalized. Renewed. That's what we hope for when we go away. A break from routine, a chance for refreshment and rest, an opportunity to get some space and peace—just the thought of it is delightful. Perhaps, when we come back from our time away, we'll finally feel something like this:

*That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither—
whatever they do prospers. (Psalm 1:3)*

You can probably imagine the scene. A sunny meadow where the clear waters of a river supply life to a lush and abundant tree, laden with fruit. This tree stands strong and tall even when storms come. Quenched with deep draughts of life, it provides sweetness and joy to all around.

Some trips away linger in the memory with sun-soaked beauty—they genuinely refresh us, giving us a glimpse of what it's like to be that well-watered tree. But it's not always that way. Things go wrong, people get ill, family members are fractious, or the weather turns sour. Some trips just make us wish we were back home!

There's one kind of refreshment we can always count

on, though. The person in Psalm 1 isn't someone who's just come back from a great trip. It's someone "whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night" (v 2). The "law of the Lord" means the Scriptures. The Bible is a book written by the Holy Spirit, at the pleasure of God, our Father, to refresh us, strengthen us, establish us and make us fruitful by showing us Jesus, his Son.

Trips away from home allow us time, space and the inclination to look, to ponder and to wonder again at God. They give us the opportunity to rest in the Lord's goodness and glory. We go away to be refreshed, and the Lord also wants to give us spiritual refreshment. He invites us to spend our vacation with him: to know true rest, to let our roots grow deeper into the one who offers us living water (John 4:10), and to become those from whom that same refreshment flows out to others (John 7:37-39).

This book is designed to help you enjoy our Lord Jesus, in his Bible and in the world he created, while you are away. Just as we often turn to a devotional book for Advent or Lent, marking those seasons when life feels different with appropriate Bible readings, so times away lend themselves to the same approach. I want to invite you to fully enjoy the season of rest you're in. Maybe you're planning to relax by the pool, hit the city streets, or hike up as many mountains as possible. Maybe you'll travel alone, with friends or relatives, or with small children in tow. Whichever, the chapters in this book have been written for you—to help you soak in the Scriptures,

so that everything you see and do starts to draw your heart to the God who made it all.

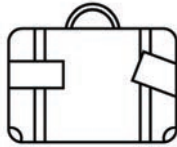
HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book is made up of 30 devotional Bible studies—each one with a Bible passage to read, a short reflection on the passage, and an idea to help you keep your mind on Christ throughout the day. They’re divided into sections depending on what sort of place or theme they fit. Some relate to the type of place you might be visiting. Others address wider themes common to many trips. This means that you can use the book in whatever way best fits you. I’d suggest that you start with the “arriving” or “rest” chapters and then pick others according to what you are doing each day. If you’re on a really long trip, you could even read it all from beginning to end!

Each of the daily reflections is primarily written for adults, but at the end of each study there are resources to help you use it as the basis of a family Bible time. There are a couple of questions to help get a conversation going, plus a suggested activity to help you have fun and engage with God’s word as a family.

However you use this book, and whatever sort of trip you are taking, my prayer for you is that you will see Jesus. And that seeing Jesus, you will be like a tree planted by streams of water: deeply refreshed.

Arriving





¹ *I lift up my eyes to the mountains –
where does my help come from?*

² *My help comes from the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth.*

³ *He will not let your foot slip –
he who watches over you will not slumber;*

⁴ *indeed, he who watches over Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.*

⁵ *The LORD watches over you –
the LORD is your shade at your right hand;*

⁶ *the sun will not harm you by day,
nor the moon by night.*

⁷ *The LORD will keep you from all harm –
he will watch over your life;*

⁸ *the LORD will watch over your coming and going
both now and forevermore.*

Psalm 121

1. HOPES AND FEARS

Psalm 121

A few weeks ago my wife and I sat with a cup of tea, newly arrived at our friends' home, enjoying the sun and grateful for a break after a tiring few months. We were lazily wondering whether this might be the trip when our girls would at last be old enough to play on their own while we both read a book. This happy thought was interrupted by our oldest daughter racing up the garden to tell us that her sister's arm was pointing the wrong way. Flick, my wife, spent the first night of our vacation in the hospital with her; then there was an operation, a cast... and a different couple of weeks to the ones we had been hoping for.

That is why Psalm 121 is a good psalm for the start of a vacation. The traveler praying this psalm lifts his eyes to the mountains. He sees the road snaking up through foothills and disappearing into the haze. He knows that the pass is high and that it will be days before he is descending into the far valley. What he does not know is what the mountains hold.

He may enjoy a walk through upland meadows, with flowers and sweet sunlight speeding his steps as he enjoys easy conversation with others he has met on the way. Or the weather may close in, bringing fog or storms, the wind lashing sleet into his eyes as he struggles to keep to

the path. The voices he hears may be the shouted cries of bandits as he runs for his life.

He does not know what the mountains hold. But he knows that he is held by God. This traveler's help does not come from his own planning, wisdom, strength or speed. His help comes from the Lord—the Maker of heaven and earth. The mighty God, a great and powerful friend, is the one who keeps us from harm and guards our lives. We know the extent of his reach: he is triumphant over death, evil and all powers natural and supernatural. We know the extent of his love: he won this triumph through dying in our place on the cross.

You do not know what this time away holds. You have hopes. You may well have fears. You might read this feeling full of light and joy, or you might feel you're already at the end of yourself. Perhaps you're aware of conversations that need to be had or pressure that must be relieved. You are tired, maybe. The Lord knows; he sees; he watches over you. He is already in the mountains, and he will watch over your coming and going this week. He cares for you, and he's the one who made heaven and earth.

FOR TODAY

Write out verses 1 and 2 (or the whole psalm) and put them in a place where you will see them as you wake up. Use them to form a prayer each morning as you lift your eyes to what the day may hold. You might like to say them out loud as you do so.

FOR THE FAMILY

Ask

- What are you hoping for over this time away? Are you worried about anything?
- Why do you think it's a good idea to think a bit about Jesus together while we're here?

Make

Do the activity above as a family. Everyone can write out and decorate their own verses, or you could do them on a big piece of paper together (or with stones on the beach, or something else—be creative!). As you decorate your verses, talk together about your hopes and fears for the vacation. Maybe you want to write them around the verses. You could then use them as a basis for prayer together. Then put the paper up somewhere so you can come back to it on subsequent days (or make the photo of the stones on the beach your phone wallpaper).