

"Lead Me to the Rock"

Devotions for Spiritual Emphasis Week,
January 30-February 3, 2012

Day 1

An Introduction to Psalm 61

On March 11, 2011, at 2:46 in the afternoon, a 9.0 earthquake hit the island of Honshu, Japan. The earthquake lasted for approximately three to five minutes, and was followed by four hundred and one documented aftershocks. But the greatest damage and the majority of the fatalities were caused by the giant tsunami that hit just minutes after the earthquake. People around the world watched the news in horror as the waves swept away cars, trucks, boats, buildings, animals, a train, and people. In all, more than 20,000 people lost their lives in these two devastating events. Only those people who were able to reach higher ground survived.

Sometimes we face situations in our lives that leave us as helpless as the people fleeing from that tsunami. No amount of knowledge, ability, money or resources can save us when our lives are hit by things like fire, drought, severe storms, illness, broken relationships, and death. At times like these, we come to realize that we are not in control and our only hope is to go to "the higher ground" that is our God.

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Day 2

Scripture Reading: Psalm 61

What is your favorite book of the Bible? As a Christian school teacher, I have loved teaching many of the Old Testament and New Testament stories. As a Coffee Break leader, I loved sharing the book of Mark with a Seeker group. My all-time favorite book, however, is the book of Psalms. One reason I particularly love this book is because the Psalms seem to put into words all of our deepest human emotions. Surprisingly, some of the most profound teaching of the Bible can be found in the Psalms.

One of my daughters likes to say that there is a *Simpsons'* episode for every situation in life. I like to say that no matter what situation you are in or what you are experiencing, there is a psalm that speaks directly to that moment. Throughout my life, certain psalms have brought me great joy and comfort. I think our theme verse is one that can speak to all of us in any difficult situation. This verse can be our prayer: "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I." This can also be our comfort because when we are standing on that rock, nothing can overwhelm us.

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Day 3

Scripture Reading: Psalm 61

Have you ever had a bad day? Back in October, our new 5th grade teacher, Mrs. Chapman, had an exceptionally bad day. When she arose from bed, she stepped into a puddle of water...it was not just a puddle, rather more than half of her house was flooded in 1-1/2" of water. Water was dripping from the ceiling and the light fixtures. So much water was running down the freshly painted walls that they were bubbling. Realizing there was not much she could do at this point to fix the situation, Mrs. Chapman left for school. Unfortunately this was not the end of her troubles. Six blocks from her home, one wheel (tire and rim) abruptly fell off her car!

David, the writer of Psalm 61, did not simply have a bad day now and then; he had many bad days, weeks, months, and even years. In his lifetime, David endured assassination attempts, grief, death, heartbreak, and betrayal. Whatever David's situation was when he wrote this psalm, we realize from verses 1 and 2 that it must have been a time of great emotional anguish and distress. In verse 2 the psalmist writes, "From the ends of the earth I call to you, I call as my heart grows faint." Some Biblical scholars think this phrase means this was a time when the psalmist was near death, but more likely it was a time when the psalmist was at the end of his rope. And so David prayed that God would lead him to the rock that is God Himself.

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Day 4

Scripture Reading: Psalm 61

What helps you feel secure? A small child might say a stuffed animal, a security blanket, a parent nearby or a nightlight. The rest of us would probably say locks, alarm systems, smoke detectors, or even living in a gated community would make us feel more secure in our homes. Those of us who drive might say seatbelts, good brakes, new tires and a cell phone for emergencies help us feel safe on the road.

The psalmists use many word pictures to help us understand the amazing security that our God offers to His children. Some of these images are items that can be found in nature. In Psalm 61, David compares God to a rock (v. 2), a strong tower (v. 3), a tent where God lives (v. 4), and the sheltering wings of a mother bird (v. 4). In other psalms, God is compared to the enduring hills, the mighty mountains, a fortress, a vigilant shepherd, a shield, a sword. His words are pure gold, sweeter than honey, and flawless like silver refined in a furnace of clay. He is the great light giver who turns darkness into light. With every word picture given to us by the psalmists, we gain a deeper understanding of the amazing love, comfort, and security offered to us by our God.

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Day 5

Scripture Reading: Psalm 61

I have to admit that over the years, I have often asked *God*, "Why me?" Why did both of my parents have serious health problems my entire childhood? Why did my beloved father die when I was fifteen? Why was I lonely so often? Why wasn't I good at music and sports? Why did *God* let so many bad things happen to me?

A couple of years ago, I had an epiphany or an "aha" moment. Instead of asking God, "Why me?" I decided to ask myself, "Why not me?" Did I deserve a trouble-free life? Should I accept only all of the easy and good things from *God's* hand and not the hard? Thinking in this way changed my whole attitude. It helped me get rid of my bitter feelings and "poor me" attitude. I was forced to face my own contribution to the difficult situation in my life. I began looking for ways I could learn from the situation. Later, I realized *my* pain could lead me to help *others* in similar circumstances.

The next time you are facing a difficult situation, use the solution David showed us in Psalm 61. Begin each day with this prayer: "Lord lead me to the rock that is higher than I." Then remind yourself all through the day and night that you are standing on the rock that is our *God*!