

go for a walk, read your Bible, listen to some worship music, call a Christian friend to have them pray for you. Or simply be still and let Him be your Shepherd. Close your eyes and imagine yourself being comforted by God like a Father. Let God care for you, let Him refresh your soul.

REFLECTION QUESTION: What are some other practical ways you can take refuge in God?

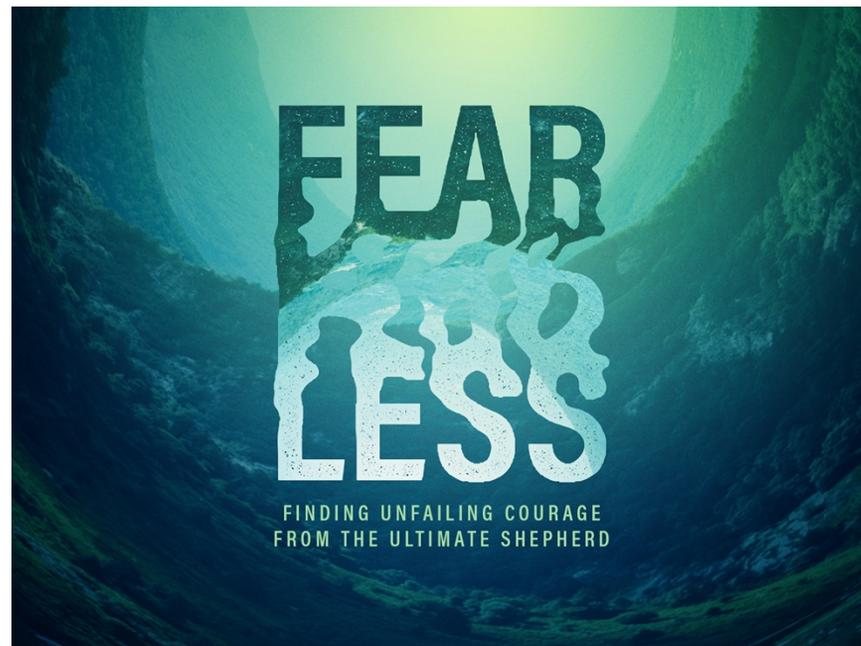
REFLECTION QUESTION: How could regular prayer, Bible study, spiritual disciplines, and Sabbath rest help us take refuge in God?

REFLECTION QUESTION: How could regularly coming to God for spiritual care change your day-to-day life, even when things aren't overwhelming?

IV. SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: FIND REST

When we talk about rest as a spiritual discipline, we typically mean the practice of taking a Sabbath rest, one day in every seven. But we can practice rest other times of the week as well. Rest is taking a break from regular work, but a spiritual rest isn't just taking a nap, a day or an afternoon off, or taking some "me time." It is *resting in the Lord*. It is about more than just not working. It's about casting your cares and burdens on the Lord and resting in Him.

For whatever time you can take—thirty minutes, an hour, the whole afternoon, or even the whole day—stop what you are doing, cast your cares on Him, and simply rest in the Lord. Spend time journaling what God speaks to you, read the Bible, listen to worship music and pray. You will never regret finding time to be alone with the Lord especially when chaos ensues around you. Be still and know He is God.



Daily Devotional Day 3:

Finding our Refuge and Strength

[Individual Version]

I. START WITH THE WORD AND PRAYER

READ: Isaiah 40:6–11

REFLECTION QUESTION: How does this passage describe God as our shepherd?

REFLECTION QUESTION: What does the contrast of Him ruling with a mighty arm and also tenderly gathering flocks in His arms tell you about the character of God?

II. DIGGING DEEPER

“He makes me lie down in green pastures . . . He refreshes my soul” – Psalm 23:2-3a

The overwhelming tone of this passage is tenderness. The Good Shepherd doesn't just rule over His people, He *tends* His flock with loving care. In the ancient world, many of the gods of other nations were described as distant deities who rained down judgment or blessing from on high. They could only be worshiped at a distance, given sacrifices and gifts to appease their wrath.

But Israel's God described Himself as “compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness” (Exodus 34:6). God told His people that when they followed His law, the other nations would be amazed at the character of their God. He commanded them to treat each other justly and to care for the vulnerable and the poor. All of this was to be down with the ongoing understanding that God was *near* to them.

“What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the Lord our God is near us whenever we pray to him?” – Deuteronomy 4:7

Most ancient gods were described more like in Isaiah 40:10—sovereign, coming with power, ruling with a mighty arm. God said He is all those things, but He is *ALSO* a tender shepherd who lovingly cares for His sheep. He knows every hair on our heads (Luke 12:7) and the deepest desires of our hearts (Psalm 37:4). He cares for His children like a mother bird cares for her young (Deuteronomy 32:10–11). He loves and cares for us like His own children (Matthew 7:11; 1 John 3:1). Ruling in power and might

doesn't have to mean being an oppressive tyrant. It can mean ruling as a loving father and a tender shepherd.

In the Psalms, David says God is near to the brokenhearted (Psalm 34:18). He is near to all who call on Him in truth. He hears their cries and saves them (Psalm 145:18–19). He is our refuge and strength, a very present help in times of trouble (Psalm 46:1). This loving shepherd invites us to take refuge in the shadow of His wings until the storms of destruction pass by (Psalm 57:1).

III. APPLYING IT TO LIFE

The choice is ours whether we will run to Him for refuge, or not.

When little kids fall and scrape their knee, they run to their mom or dad who they know loves them and will give them a big hug and make them feel better. Their parents are their “safe place.” Nothing heals the hurt like a hug from mom, dad or loving caretaker. This is the exact image Isaiah paints in verse 11. When we run to God, He picks us up and carries us close to His heart (Isaiah 40:11) and refreshes our soul (Psalm 23:3).

There is a lot of chaos in your world right now. Life in the midst of a trial bring on a lot of fear and a level of uncertainty. Most of us are staying in our homes as a physical refuge from the virus. But are we taking refuge in the Lord spiritually, in our heart and mind?

When the world gets out of control, God promises to be our hiding place and our strong tower, our sanctuary from the world. When we are weary and burdened, God invites us to rest in Him (Matthew 11:28–30). When we are brokenhearted or hurt or too tired to carry on, He gathers us in His arms and carries us close to His heart.

This week, when you are feeling overwhelmed by everything going on around you, turn off the news or outside voices and take refuge in the Lord. Escape to your own private spot to pray,