

# Refuge

Refuge means different things to different people.

To the one who is fleeing violence, refuge means protection or temporary shelter.

To the one who is homeless, refuge means a place to live.

To the one who is suffering, refuge means a source of help, relief, or comfort in times of trouble.

To whom or what do you turn when life throws you a curve ball? If the answer is anything other than God (or Jesus) you may experience temporary relief, but in the end it will leave you empty.

God alone has the ability to meet the deepest needs of your soul. Anything else is a counterfeit.

The psalmist David knew about taking refuge in God. His passionate prayer is recorded in Psalm 5.

*“Give ear to my **words**, O Lord; consider my **groaning**. Give attention to the sound of my **cry**, my King and my God, for to you do I pray.”* (vs. 1-2)

Notice the progression of emotions in David’s prayer:

Words

Groaning

Cry

When words are inadequate to describe the pain, how great to know that God hears and understands your groaning. When you cry out to him, it may be through quiet weeping or desperate screaming. He hears . . . and bears your grief in his own heart.

*“O Lord, in the morning you hear my voice;”* (v. 3a)

David began his mornings by presenting himself to God. Worship was as normal for him as breathing.

What are your first thoughts when you awake? Instead of jumping out of bed and racing through the day, take a few moments to present yourself before God. Share with him the deepest concerns of your heart and take time to worship.

*“In the morning I **prepare a sacrifice** for you and **watch**.”* (v. 3b)

What kind of sacrifice does God require of us today? David describes the sacrifice God desires in Psalm 51:17 (ESV):

*“The sacrifices of God are a **broken spirit**; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”*

God responds to brokenness and repentance, but despises an arrogant, prideful attitude of entitlement and demand.

Another form of sacrifice is described in Romans 12:1:

*“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.”*

God is more interested in who you are than in what you do. If your heart reflects his, you will treat others

with respect and compassion, with mercy instead of condemnation.

Your acts of worship will no longer be confined to singing and praying inside the walls of a church building, but will move outside to meet the needs of the hurting and broken around you.

After David's sacrifice and worship, he waited for God to respond. Many of our conversations with God are one-way—from us to him. Instead, we need to wait and listen for whatever he wants to tell us.

The song *Wait For Your Rain* by Todd Agnew talks about approaching God in brokenness, waiting for him to respond:

*"I cannot believe I'm this dirty. I'm ashamed to even ask to be clean. I can't think of anyone less worthy. I have nothing to offer or to bring. So I throw myself on Your mercy. I throw myself at Your feet. I throw my filth on the grace of One whose beauty is beyond me. And I wait . . ."*

What filth in your life creates a barrier to fellowship with God?

Check out the list in verses 4-6:

*"For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you. The **boastful** shall not stand before your eyes; you hate all **evildoers**. You destroy those who speak **lies**; the Lord abhors the **bloodthirsty and deceitful man**."*

Before you begin thinking of the names of evil people who have done you wrong, stop and deal with your own heart.

Have you ever been prideful and arrogant? *I have.*

Have you ever done an evil deed, even if it was just one time? *I have.*

Have you ever lied? *I have.*

Have you ever wished someone would stop existing, even if you would never commit murder yourself? *I have.*

Have you ever been deceitful? *I have.*

The song says, *"I throw my filth on the grace of One whose beauty is beyond me. And I wait . . ."*

**Why wait?** When you shut your mouth and open your ears to God's truth, he will reveal the motives of your heart and any barriers to fellowship you may be unaware of.

Healing comes from a position of brokenness as God's mercy and forgiveness washes over you. He covers you with his righteousness and makes you worthy of approaching a holy God.

*"But I, through the **abundance** of your **steadfast** love, will enter your house. (v. 7a)*

Don't misread verse 7. It is not through your good behavior and church attendance that you are allowed to approach God. If you're having trouble with that thought, go back and read verses 4-6 to refresh your memory of who you really are without God's righteousness.

Then read the words (bold print) in verse 7 that describe God's love—abundant and steadfast. Abundant love means he has enough for the rest of your life—it won't run out and is not dependent on whether or not you are good. It is based on *his* goodness.

Steadfast love is what we all long for. It goes the distance and never changes. This kind of love is not

based on your appearance, good or bad behavior, or your response. It reflects the very character of God that is immutable—unchangeable.

Next, notice the posture of the body and heart when you encounter a holy God:

*“I will bow down toward your holy temple in the fear of you.” (v. 7b)*

Bowing down indicates an attitude of humility. In a radio interview with Spirit 1053, Todd Agnew was asked how he stayed real. He responded, *“When Isaiah came into the presence of God it forced him to his face. When you encounter God, it keeps you humble, it keeps you real, it keeps you normal. You don’t have any option in the face of perfection, in the face of holiness, than just to be broken and seek after what He wants. So rather than have a goal of staying humble or being real, my goal is to stay connected, keep staring into the face of the Lord, and trust that whatever interaction I have with Him, that’s going to make me into the person I need to be.”*

The other response to God is fear (v. 7b). However, this is not fear that God is going to punish you for being bad—it is a response of reverence and awe in the presence of holiness.

In verses 8-10, David discusses his need for God’s righteousness in dealing with his enemies.

*“Lead me, O Lord, in your righteousness because of my enemies; make your way straight before me.” (v. 8)*

How often do we ask God to bless *our* way? We want to control our own lives, but still expect God to come through when we need something. Look closely at the beginning of the verse: *“Lead me. . .”*

How do you deal with those who hurt you? Do you ask God for his righteousness instead of wallowing in your own vindictiveness?

Read the description of David’s enemies in verses 9-10. Do any of them look familiar in your world today? They are people who:

Speak lies

Seek to destroy and tear down

Speak death instead of life (verbal abuse)

Flatter, charm, and deceive

In verse 10, David gives up his right for revenge and places it in God’s hands. If you’re holding on with both fists clenched, let go and let God deal with them in his way, in his time.

Why be embroiled in a fight when you could find **joy, rest and peace**? Refuge!

*“But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy. And spread your protection over them that those who love your name may exult in you.” (v. 11)*

*“For you bless the righteous, O Lord; you cover him with favor as with a shield.” (v. 12)*

Not only can you find refuge (help, relief, comfort) in God, but he gives you a joyful heart and covers (shields) you with his favor. When you’re broken and hurting, present yourself to God, allow him to cleanse your heart and mind, humble yourself as you encounter his holiness, walk confidently in his righteousness, and hide yourself in his protection and favor.

*“If I could just sit with you a while,  
If you could just hold me;  
Nothing can touch me, though I’m wounded, though I die.  
If I could just sit with you a while,  
I need you to hold me  
Moment by moment ‘till forever passes by.”*

—Dennis Jernigan

By Brenda Branson © 2006 FOCUS Ministries, Inc., P.O. Box 2014, Elmhurst, IL 60126  
[www.focusministries1.org](http://www.focusministries1.org)