

WHERE DOES MY HELP COME FROM?

a prayer of reassurance



Psalm 121

 Hazlemere
church

IN

Introduction

Connecting in with each other

- Where do you generally look for help?
- Do you look to things other than God for help?
- What do your mountains look like right now?

Pause and pray for the Holy Spirit to guide your thoughts as you study this Psalm

UP

Explore

Exploring Gods word to draw closer to Him

Read through the whole of Psalm 121

- Discuss why the structure and context of the psalm are important.
- Can you make a contemporary equivalence for a long journey that we might make these days?
- Think about the psalm in the light of 1 Corinthians 10.13 and Romans 8.28, 31-2.
- What's the relationship between us, God and the troubles we inevitably face?
- In what ways can we respond when we do hit troubles?

The impact on our lives

Which verse is God drawing your attention to? Share it with the group and pray into it together.

End with a time of prayer for each other, and for the world.

OUT

Impact

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Some brief thoughts from the Psalm on the question of providence and God's reign

What is 'providence'? (vv 2, 4, 5, 7, 8)

If God reigns, why do we stumble, why do we 'get scorched', why do we face tragedies? Does it mean that these things are God's will? Is God *really* in control? The extent of God's control in what happens on earth is traditionally called the doctrine of providence. Calvin, the 16th century theologian, says it this way:

Not only heaven and earth and the inanimate creatures, but also the plans and intentions of men, are so governed by his providence that they are borne by it straight to their appointed end. (*Institutes 1:16:8*)

What does it mean for us?

The benefit of the doctrine of providence as Calvin sees it is that, although we face troubles, God's being in control means that nothing can hurt us *at random*, because nothing happens outside of God's purposes. Either God 'positively ordains' *everything*, in the words of Calvin, or God positively ordains some things, and *permits* some other (tragic) things and then weaves them into his plan, according to Augustine.

Is God really in control? Why do bad things happen?

On the one hand, the conflict between God and Satan means that God's will will not fully prevail until the end of times. This would account somewhat for the existence of evil and suffering (see Dom's notes on Suffering and Psalm 22). On the other hand, God is working out his purposes here and now, making good from evil.

Our reassurance (vs. 7-8)

Harm does sometimes come our way, but ultimately, God is with us, loves us and will not allow evil to prevail over our hearts, minds and souls. He watches over us.