

Small Group Guide — November 13, 2022

- Series: Angels
- Sermon: What are they Like
- Scripture: Psalm 91:1-13

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps the thread that has tied the sermons together in this series is that angels, so often spoken of in the Word, are difficult to wrap our heads around. Each answer to the questions like, “Who are angels?” and “What do angels do?” and “What are angels like?” suggest new questions that invite us into a world that is bigger than we can conceive, more complex than we can explain, and more beautiful than our eyes and ears can perceive — all pointing to the immensity of God’s glory.

This week, the discussion guide is intended to help us enter a deeper place of seeing and hearing God through an introduction to *Lectio Divina*, or *Holy Listening*. If this is new to you as a group leader, don’t worry. This guide is intended to walk you through this practice of quiet scripture meditation.

(If you would like to do a little more reading on this practice, we recommend taking a few minutes to read [this](#). Much of this article is included below, but the full article provides more context and may help to ease any concerns you have for leading this practice for the first time.)

In preparation for this process, please print three copies of [Psalm 91:1-13](#). Also, set the right environment for holy listening. You might consider lighting a candle and putting on instrumental music [like this](#).

When people arrive, ask three people if they would be willing to read the Psalm.

FOLLOW-UP FROM LAST WEEK: Thin places are defined as those places where the veil between this world and the spiritual world is thin — where the spiritual world is nearer. Can you think of a time where you stood at a thin place? Perhaps on the open ocean or on the edge of a mountain? Maybe when you held a baby in your arms. How did you feel? How do you feel as you reflect on that time?

After members get settled and you’ve done the FOLLOW-UP question, take a few minutes to orient the group to *Lectio Divina*. This is a good bit different from sharing intellectual opinions about the sermon, and may take some getting used to. Suggested opening:

Tonight, we will be going through a Scripture meditation process. This is very different, and I ask that you keep an open mind. I’ll prompt you at each step on what we’re about to do. At times, I will ask questions that will invite you to share your reflections.

Again, this way of being a small group is different from what we’ve done to this point. If at any time you’re not sure what to do, it’s okay. Just wait quietly. This may not feel natural. It’s okay.

I would ask that you please honor the confidentiality of this meditation and commit to not sharing outside of this group. It’s important that each of you feel free to share what the Spirit may be speaking to you. It will take courage to do so. Knowing that it will stay in this room will help. Can we all commit to that?

This is the rhythm of our process tonight. We will repeat these steps three times:

- *We will read scripture aloud.*
- *We will reflect quietly on a focus question which I will give you.*
- *We will respond in quiet prayer.*
- *We will rest quietly until I invite you to share with the group.*

I think this will become clearer as we move through the process.

Let's begin with prayer: Holy Spirit, how grateful we are for you being right here and right now, in this very room. May you open the ears of our hearts so that we may trust that which you are whispering to us. We invite you to shape us into what you intend for us to be and, as you see fit, to allow us behold your glory with reverence and awe. Amen.

FIRST READING - CONNECT

As we read the first time, please listen for one word or phrase from the text that the Holy Spirit impresses on you. Then meditate quietly on that word. After a few moments, I'll invite you to share that word with the group if you would like...

Ask one of the three people to read the passage aloud.

Allow 2–5 minutes of silent prayer.

If you have received a word or phrase, and it's okay if you have not, you can share that with the group now by speaking it out loud as a prayer — with no explanation or commentary. This way, we can feed off the fruit of each other's meditations.

SECOND READING - ENGAGE

For our second reading, our focus point is to enter into the Scripture passage. Consider these questions as you do:

- *What do you feel?*
- *What specific situation in your life today relates to this scripture?*

In the quiet reflection time, pray silently.

Ask one of the three people to read the passage aloud.

After they are done, allow 3-10 minutes of silent prayer.

Okay, I want to invite you to pray for yourself out loud. I know this is not natural, as we often pray for others, but it would be a blessing for the rest of us in the group and hopefully to you if we pray silently with you and for you.

*What feelings or life situation would you like to offer in prayer out loud? **

*Note: As the group leader, you may want to consider beginning this response in order to model vulnerability and brevity.

Allow time for silence. It may feel uncomfortable, but trust that God is working in the members of your group. Some may pray aloud. Some may not. But you can be confident that God is at work in the silence.

THIRD READING - APPLY

Let's do our last reading. As we do, please consider this question during your quiet reflection:

What is God's personal invitation to you from the Bible passage? Please ask your inner critic or cynic in your mind that questions whether you're really hearing God to stand aside. When God speaks, it's usually in thoughts and feelings that come into your mind. Again, what is God inviting you, and you specifically, to hear in this Bible passage?

Ask the third person to read the passage aloud.

After they are done, allow 3-10 minutes of silent prayer.

At the end of the silent prayer time, close the prayer with, *In Jesus' name, Amen*. Then, wait a moment before engaging the group.

If you've received a personal invitation from the Lord, it would be a blessing if you share that. This helps you hold onto what you've received from God, and it helps others to feed off the fruit of your meditation.

Note: You may want to guide the process to help the people who share to receive empathy and compassion. Gently remind members this group is not for advice or reassurance, but to share what God has laid on our hearts. Moderate the time each person shares to allow time for everyone to share if they want to and for the group to close in prayer.

CLOSING PRAYER

Holy, holy, holy God, You imagine the mountains and the mountains are. You laugh and the oceans laugh along. You dance and the stars dance with you. You breathe and suddenly there is life where there was nothing. All glory to you, God. How astounding that you, the God of all Here and the God of all Now, would choose to be with us, in this very room, in this very place. We stand in awe and in deepest gratitude for your loving care of each of us. Thank you for these words and these invitations. They are all loving offers to behold your glory and to come closer to your boundless love. How great you are! Amen.

GOING DEEPER

Consider the words and invitations God has spoken to you tonight. Take the time to write them down, and as the week progresses, consider how God is using these gifts to draw you nearer. Notice them, and consider prayers of gratitude when you do.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 1:14

Matthew 13:39-42

Psalm 91 (New Living Translation)

Those who live in the shelter of the Most High
will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty.
This I declare about the Lord:
He alone is my refuge, my place of safety;
he is my God, and I trust him.
For he will rescue you from every trap
and protect you from deadly disease.
He will cover you with his feathers.
He will shelter you with his wings.
His faithful promises are your armor and protection.
Do not be afraid of the terrors of the night,
nor the arrow that flies in the day.
Do not dread the disease that stalks in darkness,
nor the disaster that strikes at midday.
Though a thousand fall at your side,
though ten thousand are dying around you,
these evils will not touch you.
Just open your eyes,
and see how the wicked are punished.
If you make the Lord your refuge,
if you make the Most High your shelter,
no evil will conquer you;
no plague will come near your home.
For he will order his angels
to protect you wherever you go.
They will hold you up with their hands
so you won't even hurt your foot on a stone.
You will trample upon lions and cobras;
you will crush fierce lions and serpents under your feet!