Sermon Outline

Including Background Information

1 I lift up my eyes to the mountains –  
where does my help come from?  
2 My help comes from the LORD,  
the Maker of heaven and earth.

3 He will not let your foot slip –  
he who watches over you will not slumber;  
4 indeed, he who watches over Israel  
will neither slumber nor sleep.

5 The LORD watches over you –  
the LORD is your shade at your right hand;  
6 the sun will not harm you by day,  
nor the moon by night.

7 The LORD will keep you from all harm –  
he will watch over your life;  
8 the LORD will watch over your coming and going  
both now and for evermore.

Psalm 121 NIV

# Welcome and Introduction

If you have this paper in your hands, it means that you have been entrusted with a sermon for the International Day of Children and Young People.

Congratulations! In this outline, you can find some background information and some pointers to make your own sermon. You are a unique person and God speaks to you in a unique way. So, make this sermon your own by reading and listening carefully to what God is saying.

Enjoy this journey with God and be blessed by it and be a blessing to others!

# How Do I Write a Sermon?

* Take time to read the Scripture verses prayerfully. Do it several times and use three different translations or versions. What catches your attention? What questions do you have? What challenges you? What is God saying to you? Write these things down.
* Read the background information. How does this impact your understanding of the Bible verses? Add your thoughts to your notes.
* Think about the people you are talking to. Who are they? What is their background? How old are they? What do they need? You can always send a group of children and young people a WhatsApp or Messenger message. Ask them to read the Bible verses and to let you know what questions they have and what challenges them. This information is always very helpful, and it will give you a good direction for your sermon.
* What is the message you want people to take with them? Write it down in one sentence.
* Try to focus on one to three points in your sermon. Feel free to choose your own, but here are some examples if you want to focus on Psalm 121.
  + **Where do we look for help?** Take a short moment to think about where we seek help these days when we feel helpless, sad or anxious. We sometimes turn to comfort food, shopping or binge-watching TV shows. This only gives a temporary relief, while our true help comes from the Maker of heaven and earth.
  + **Look up to God.** Taking a pause and seeking God’s presence allows us to understand how great God is. If he created the universe, no problem is too big for God. He is a constant helper in your life.
  + **Look out at the world.** God’s spirit works through his whole creation: nature and people. He might have used your parents to comfort you or your friends to fill you with joy. Have a look at your world and how God is at work in your life.

You can unwrap these three points with the information and questions you had yourself or from a group of young people.

Before you end your sermon, include some ‘wondering’ questions that challenge people, such as:

* I wonder which part of this psalm is about you.
* I wonder which part of this psalm is most important.
* I wonder what challenges you the most in this psalm.

End your sermon with an invitation to the people to respond in their own way to what God is saying to them. Does God ask for a new commitment? Does God challenge people to do something? Explain the place of the mercy seat and invite people to use the mercy seat as a place for prayer, surrendering or renewal of their commitment.

# Background Information on Psalm 121

Psalm 121 is one of the 15 psalms that are known as the Psalms of Ascent. Those psalms were recited or sung by Jewish pilgrims as they travelled to Jerusalem for special celebrations. The songs reflect the feelings and thoughts of the pilgrims.

This psalm expresses trust in God for protection and guidance on the journey, and concludes with the statement that God will watch over you.

It is very likely that it was written during a time when the Israelites were facing difficult circumstances, and they were looking for protection and refuge. Traditionally, Psalm 121 is attributed to David, although specific authorship is not explicitly stated in the text.

What the Psalmist shows us in this psalm is that when we look up, we focus on the almighty God rather than on our limitations. He has given us so many wonderful promises in his word, and when we look up to him, we are reminded of his might and power and his ability to stand by his promises.

# Other Stories about Looking Up

There are several occasions where the Bible tells us that people are told to look up:

1. Abraham was told to look up and count the stars. He was miserable as he did not have a son, but God had promised him that through his offspring all nations would be blessed.
2. When the Israelites were attacked by snakes in the wilderness, Moses was told to make a bronze serpent that they could lift their eyes and look at for healing. You can read this story in Numbers 21:4-9.
3. The Magi were the first to worship Jesus. They navigated by following a star, and they found the Saviour of the world. To do that, they had to look up!

Have you ever got lost? It is a terrible feeling when you don’t know where you are and where you are going. The solution is to lift up your eyes and look around you. Then you can discover landmarks: maybe there are mountains you can look up to so you can navigate or perhaps there is a tall building or trees. But you need to look up to discover these things.

Abraham was told to look up and count the stars. Abraham was worried because he didn’t have an heir, and God had promised that through his descendant the whole world would be blessed. How could that happen when he didn’t have children? It seemed quite impossible at the time, but God kept his promise, Abraham became a father, and, in due time, Jesus was born into Abraham’s bloodline.

Numbers 21:4-9 tells the story of the Israelites wandering in the desert, where they faced hardships and spoke against God and Moses. As a consequence, God sent venomous snakes among them, which bit the people, leading to many deaths. In their desperation, the people repented and asked Moses to intercede with God. God instructed Moses to create a bronze serpent and put it on a pole; anyone who was bitten could look at the serpent and be healed.

In their moment of crisis, the Israelites were instructed to look up at the bronze serpent to find healing. This act of looking signifies an act of faith and surrender, placing their trust in God’s provision for their healing. It symbolises the importance of shifting your focus towards God, especially in times of distress.

Just like the Israelites looked up, we can look up. Look up to God and look up to Jesus who gave us new life! Fix your eyes on the Creator and Saviour, especially in challenging times.

Look up for guidance, for hope and for salvation.

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