

REFUGE

31-DAY DEVOTIONAL

MICHAEL CHERENKOV • GARY G. HOAG

REFUGE

Welcome to REFUGE. We wrote this book because we want everyone in the world to know this profound biblical truth that sustains and strengthens us. It relates to every person everywhere. It fits in every situation. We could describe it as the foundation of the Christian faith.

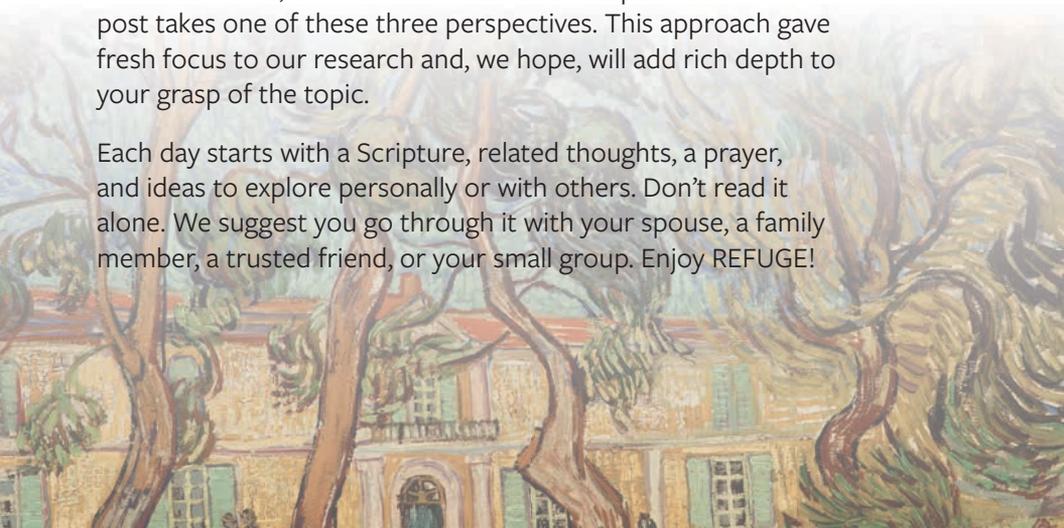
“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.” Psalm 46:1

Refuge, by definition, refers to a person or place of shelter, sanctuary, or support in times of need. As we pondered the topic, our minds went to stories of biblical characters like Noah, Moses, David, Esther, Daniel, Mary, Peter, Paul, and others who found refuge in God.

We had people needing refuge in mind as the audience of this book. That includes persecuted, war-torn, oppressed, and suffering people. And yet, since we all endure difficulties and need to learn to take refuge in God, we wrote the book in such a way that everyone can benefit.

REFUGE is a 31-day reflective journey that explores who God is, how God works, and how He invites us to respond to Him. Each post takes one of these three perspectives. This approach gave fresh focus to our research and, we hope, will add rich depth to your grasp of the topic.

Each day starts with a Scripture, related thoughts, a prayer, and ideas to explore personally or with others. Don't read it alone. We suggest you go through it with your spouse, a family member, a trusted friend, or your small group. Enjoy REFUGE!



“Then the Lord will create over all of Mount Zion and over those who assemble there a cloud of smoke by day and a glow of flaming fire by night; over everything the glory will be a canopy. It will be a shelter and shade from the heat of the day, and a refuge and hiding place from the storm and rain.”

Isaiah 4:5-6

As we begin to explore the idea of refuge, we do so with trepidation. We do not want to dismiss or minimize pain that you might feel about very real and hard circumstances. Rather, we want to meet you in your place of trial with profound truth.

We have endured the pain of the loss of loved ones. We have experienced life in a war zone in a time of active conflict. We have felt fury, betrayal, and abandonment. But, by the grace of God, we found refuge and want to point the way for others.

God is only a refuge for those who assemble under His canopy. Join us there. It's a safe place.

Having lived through tough experiences, we felt led to write this book. We do not know what storms buffet you or what enemies assail

you, but we do know this. You can find shelter and shade under the canopy. Why? God is only a refuge for those who assemble under His canopy. Join us there. It's a safe place.

Lord, I come to You with my pain and problems. Give me shelter and shade.

Teach me what it means to make You my Refuge. Amen.

As you read this, did anyone come to mind? Invite them to assemble under the canopy of the Lord with you. Read REFUGE together.



“And He passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, ‘The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished; He punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.’”

Exodus 34:6-7

Though no one can see God and live, God passed in front of Moses to reveal Himself to humanity. Today’s Scripture illustrates the identity of the Lord, our God, from that scene. Note three things we can learn from this text.

First, God is compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in love, faithfulness, and forgiveness. He is all we need and more! Second, He does not leave the guilty unpunished. We can trust Him to hold people accountable for their actions. Third, He even addresses systemic sins that span multiple generations.

Now that you have read this, you can say that the Lord your God has passed in front of you. See how good God is, what He looks at, and how He promises to address sin and injustice. A look back at history shows that nations rise and fall, but His reign endures forever.

See how good God is, what He looks at, and how He promises to address sin and injustice.

My Lord and My God, thanks for passing in front of me. Thanks for Your grace toward me. I trust You to deal with the guilty. Amen.

Get a journal. Make two lists. (1) List God’s traits and give thanks for them. (2) List the guilty in your world and ask God to deal with them.

“The Lord said to Moses, ‘Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward. Lift up your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the people of Israel may go through the sea on dry ground.’”

Exodus 14:15-16

In reading this famous scene from the life of Moses, you discover the faith God expects of His servants. He told Moses to tell the people to go forward. That’s what we get to do in hopeless situations. Notice that this instruction came before the sea parted allowing them to pass on dry ground.

Consider how counterintuitive God’s ways appear! In a bad time, we want to retreat or run and hide. God tells His servants to instruct His people to go forward. What might that mean for you today?

Whether you fit the role of Moses in the story, or the people staring at the sea, take heart and go forward.

Might you comfort a person who has experienced a great loss? Could you listen to a soul who feels lost or confused? Or could you help a person pick up the pieces of life after a tragedy? In each case, you cannot solve their

problems, but you can inspire them to go forward. When they do, the Lord does the impossible. He parts the sea.

Whether you fit the role of Moses in the story or the people staring at the sea, take heart and go forward. Watch how God will work.

God, help me go forward one step at a time, trusting You. Amen.

Do you need to remind anyone to “go forward” today? Follow the leading of the Spirit to help them find dry land on which to walk.

“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.”

Exodus 20:2

God is a Way Maker. As the modern song states, He is also a Miracle Worker, Promise Keeper, and a Light in the darkness. In today’s Scripture, we see two more traits that portray Him as our Refuge.

God is a Bondage Breaker. His people endured slavery in Egypt for 430 years. Over that time frame, they developed harmful habits and bad thought patterns, and the evil one established spiritual strongholds in their lives. God broke all that and gave them something in return.

God can serve as Way Maker, Bondage Breaker, and Freedom Giver for you. He can make a way.

God is Freedom Giver. He set His people free and gave them the Law through Moses. It outlined the parameters of relationship with Him.

He also led them through the wilderness and into the Promised Land. He did these things back then and still works this way now.

God can serve as Way Maker, Bondage Breaker, and Freedom Giver for you. He can make a way. He can deliver you from temporal strife and spiritual bondage. He can free you to grasp life with Him right now through Jesus and the Promised Land of Heaven someday.

God, show me the way, release me from bondage, and set me free to experience life with You through Jesus Christ. Amen.

If you feel discouraged, then it may seem hard to believe these things about God. Call to Him for help to believe. He hears you.

“When a trumpet sounds in a city, do not the people tremble? When disaster comes to a city, has not the Lord caused it? Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing His plan to His servants the prophets.”

Amos 3:6-7

We serve a trustworthy and dependable God. He reveals His ways to His servants, the prophets, who tell us to pursue righteousness or, in plain terms, the right way to live. The prophets remind us that God allows troubles to point everyone back to Him.

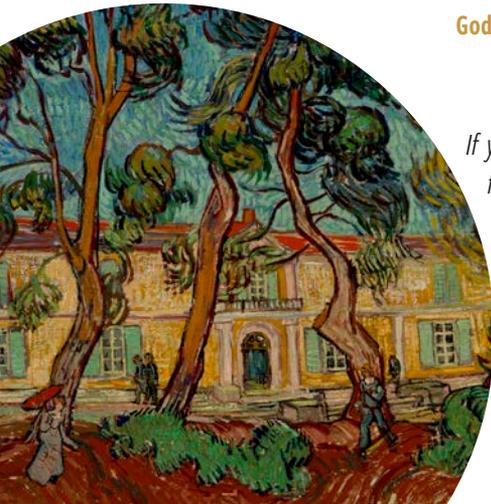
The prophets remind us that God allows troubles to point everyone back to Him.

This helps us make sense of the circumstances in life when nothing around us seems right. When sirens blare and disasters befall us, we do not need to fear or worry. We can trust that God has chosen to unfold His plan. At that moment, we must listen to the prophets.

Prophets should not be understood as people who predict the future. They play the opposite role. Prophets have no idea what may happen in the days to come, but they can explain the present by considering how God has revealed Himself in the past. These people appear as pastors, teachers, authors, and professors. Spend time with them, listen, and learn from them to know God deeply like them.

God, thanks for revealing Your plan to Your prophets. Amen.

If you have questions about God or your hard times, find a trusted person – a present-day prophet – with whom you can talk. Share your heart. Ask them for advice to help you and for aiding others.



“I sought the Lord, and He answered me; He delivered me from all my fears.”

Psalm 34:4

David, the psalmist, had foes chasing him and fears aimed at sowing depression, defeat, and discouragement in his life. Perhaps you can relate? Many things have gone wrong, so you fear the worst as you look to the future. Your mind races. What if this or that happens?

The “what if” thoughts of life tend to immobilize, isolate, and incapacitate us. They immobilize us because they dominate our thoughts. This, in turn, causes us to feel alone, isolated, abandoned, and forgotten. In so doing, the fears prevent us from functioning in a normal way. They incapacitate us and make us unproductive.

David shows us how to find freedom from this vicious cycle: seek the Lord. In everyday life, this appears as putting our scattered thoughts, concerns, fears, and worries on a platter and giving them to God. In exchange, God invites us to worship Him and rest in His peace and care. No wonder David wrote many psalms! He learned to exchange worry for worship, and God repeatedly filled his heart with joy.

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God, please deliver me from my fears. I want to exchange worry for worship. Fill me with Your peace and joy. Amen.

Make a list of “what if” situations that grip you. Imagine putting them on platter and give them to God. Exchange worry for worship. Imagine: “what if” you made this a regular discipline in your life?

**“The Lord is my rock, my fortress,
and my deliverer; my God is my
rock, in whom I take refuge,
my shield and the horn of my
salvation, my stronghold.”**

Psalm 18:2

Here, David the psalmist describes God as His refuge using three different terms: rock, fortress, and deliverer. While the words may sound similar, let us look more closely to see what they teach us.

As our rock, the Lord serves as a stable, trustworthy foundation for life in an unstable world riddled with corruption and brokenness. As our fortress, He serves as our shield and the horn of our salvation, meaning that He protects us from real danger. And as our deliverer, He puts us in a safe place, a stronghold, so we need not fear any foe.

Whether or not we face hard times right now, each of us certainly will face them at some point in our lives. Such times will overwhelm us if we do not center our lives on the Lord as our rock.

Whether or not we face hard times right now, each of us certainly will face them at some point in our lives. Such times will overwhelm us if we do not center our lives on the Lord as our rock. When tribulations abound, God invites each of us personally to declare our confidence in His protection and care, just as David did.

**God, I proclaim You as my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer.
Thank You for giving me stability, protection, and care. Amen.**

Do you know anyone enduring difficulty right now? How might reminding them of these three characteristics of God – rock, fortress, and deliverer – provide them with the gift of stability and the assurance of God’s protection and care?

“When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider this: God has made the one as well as the other. Therefore, no one can discover anything about their future.”

Ecclesiastes 7:14

Solomon tells us to enjoy the good times and embrace the bad ones as both come from God. He also adds that the future is uncertain. So why does the wisest man who ever lived instruct us in this way?

Candidly, most people live as though they think they can control both the present and the future. Hence, frustration arises when life does not go as planned. Imagine an alternative approach.

What if we choose to give thanks in our present circumstances and entrust the future to God? We will gain at least three benefits. First, we will enjoy each day in the present as a gift from God. Second, we will welcome bad times and trials, knowing that God allows them for our growth and His glory. Third, we will have peace rather than worry related to the future. No wonder Solomon gave this advice!

Most of us get this wrong. When we do, we grumble about the past, fail to enjoy the present, and dread the future. That’s no way to live. God wants more for us.

Most of us get this wrong. When we do, we grumble about the past, fail to enjoy the present, and dread the future. That’s no way to live. God wants more for us. What if we develop a pattern of giving thanks in all situations and placing the future in His capable hands?

God, I surrender my present and future desires to You. Amen.

If this feels hard, ask God for help. He understands how hard it is. When times are bad, be patient and know that good times will come. Our future belongs to God.

“In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry and do not give the devil a foothold.”

Ephesians 4:26-27

When something happens that does not seem right, we get upset. When injustice inflicts wounds in our lives, the response goes much deeper. We feel angry. In response, we might cry, “This must stop!” It is right to experience anger because of our moral sensitivity. However, we cannot lose our minds or surrender to our emotions.

Each of us has a decision to make in the face of injustice; we can hold on to the anger or give it to God.

At this point, the anger can start to burn hotter within us. Each of us has a decision to make in the face of injustice; we can hold on to the anger or give it to God. Consider the implications.

When we hold on to anger, the devil gets a hold on us. Notice the expression about sundown. The Jewish day ended at sunset. To hold anger beyond that moment implies that we offer the guest room of our heart to the evil one. This gives him space to wreak more havoc.

In this situation, righteous anger (or the right way to relate to anger) appears as giving it to God, described in other biblical texts as the only righteous Judge. He’s the only One who can make things right.

This response is a paradox. It’s also one of many counterintuitive ideas linked to finding refuge in God. We find peace only by letting go. Does anger have a hold on you? If so, let it go. Give it to God.

God, I give You my anger. Fill my heart with peace instead. Amen.

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you any anger to give to God and to clean out spots where the devil has a foothold. Then, ask Him to fill you with peace and help you guard your heart and mind when you find yourself on the brink of everything.

**“The Lord is close to the
brokenhearted and saves those
who are crushed in spirit.”**

Psalm 34:18

In the face of disaster, David assures us of the compassionate presence of the Lord. We refer to this as compassionate because the Lord moves with love toward hurting and hopeless people.

Like the Lord, we get to move close to brokenhearted people. Most people do not move in this direction, saying, “I don’t know what I would say to a brokenhearted person.” To this we reply, “You need not say anything.” Many refer to this as the ministry of presence.

The fact that we can move close to people in distress communicates more love than any sermon and more kindness than any words. And it may just keep them from giving up and from losing heart.

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We will never forget the words of a weary relief worker on the front lines of war who said to us, “Thanks for coming. We don’t get many visitors, and your visit really encouraged us.” We said very little on our visit. Our presence sent a message of hope, solidarity, and love.

**God, teach me to draw near to the
brokenhearted like You. Amen.**

Don’t overthink this. What if you made it a practice to move close to brokenhearted people each week? You can visit a person at their home, the hospital, or some other place. Ask the Lord to show you ways to deliver hope, solidarity, and love through your presence.

“The Lord then said to Noah, ‘Go into the ark, you and your whole family, because I have found you righteous in this generation.’”

Genesis 7:1

God found Noah to be righteous in his generation, so He made a way of escape from judgment for him and his family. Many people read this story and miss the vital relevance for us in these modern times.

God looks for people who choose to do what is right regardless of what everyone else is doing. When He finds such people, He shows them how to avoid allowing the corruption around them to destroy them. And interestingly, God does not just save such people; He saves their families and preserves His creation in the process.

Be like Noah. Be found righteous in your generation, and God will certainly look after you.

Consider the implications for today in war-torn or desolate places. God has already shown us in other texts that

He will avenge sinners and address systemic injustice. This text teaches us that He wants to provide a future and resources to those who choose to live rightly.

What does God find when He looks at you? Be like Noah. Be found righteous in your generation, and God will certainly look after you.

God, teach me to live rightly in a world filled with wrongdoing and trust that You will care for me when judgment comes. Amen.

Talk with your family members about the lessons in this devotional. Which one touched you the most? How might sharing it with your family encourage their righteous living?

“Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.”

Esther 4:16

Part of the reason for a fast relates to setting aside our desires to pursue God’s heart. When we engage in the practice in community, it fosters a sense of unity and dependence on God. In the case of Esther, the king’s decree put her people in jeopardy of destruction.

What did she do? Esther called the people to gather and fast for three days. In Scripture, this time frame implies moving from death to life. By fasting together, they communicated a collective call to God to deliver them. And that’s just what He did!

When we as God’s people gather and fast together, we declare that we need God to serve as our refuge in a time of trouble. We recommend this discipline for people pummeled by persecution, ravaged by war, or collectively experiencing tribulation. Pastors and influential workers do well to call God’s people to gather and fast. Nothing can stand against those united in prayer and fasting!

God, teach me to practice fasting for my people, I pray. Amen.

How might gathering and fasting apply in your setting? What if you did it together? How might you help your people find refuge in God together?

When we as God’s people gather and fast together, we declare that we need God to serve as our refuge in a time of trouble.



“If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and He will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. But even if He does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”

Daniel 3:17-18

This statement by Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego teaches us how to endure persecution. We cannot order God to respond in a certain way. We can, however, entrust ourselves to His magnificent and miraculous care. At this moment in the fiery furnace story, we do not know the outcome. We know only where they placed their trust.

When we trust in God, He is able to change even the most horrible oppressors into people who honor His matchless power.

But we also read that they wanted their oppressor to know something. They wanted the king to know they would not serve or worship other gods. This teaches us what to tell our oppressors. Nebuchadnezzar had a huge statue and all authority, and he demanded obedience. Such

people trust in their power, wealth, and intellect. The greatest miracle in this story is not the deliverance from the fire but the proclamation by the king that no other god can save like theirs. When we trust in God, He is able to change even the most horrible oppressors into people who honor His matchless power.

God, I trust in Your ability to deliver persecuted people and to change the hearts of even the most horrible oppressors. Amen.

How Christians suffer shows our faith and can change the hearts of our oppressors. Pray for the persecuted church to have this witness.



“Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisors, ‘Weren’t there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?’ They replied, ‘Certainly, Your Majesty.’ He said, ‘Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.’”

Daniel 3:24-25

God often does not save His servants *from* persecution but *through* it. He allows these trials to purify His people and to show His glory to those who do not yet know Him. This scene teaches us that God can make His servants fireproof and can even transform oppressive and fiery situations into safe and comfortable places to walk and talk. You may smell of smoke yet remain unharmed. With God, any place – even the fiery furnace – can be safe! Better to go through the fire with God than live in the palace without Him.

If you find yourself experiencing religious persecution, join Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and place your trust in the God who meets and communes with you in the fire. Keep walking and talking with the Lord and fellow Christians, unbound and unharmed. Move without fear but with confidence in God’s presence despite the heat. Your bold faith serves as a witness to the watching world.

Keep walking and talking with the Lord and fellow Christians – unbound and unharmed – and move without fear but with confidence in God’s presence despite the heat.

God, give persecuted Christians the courage to hold on to You and the freedom to walk and talk unbound and unharmed. Amen.

We want to invite you to add the persecuted church to your daily prayers. Pray for Christians in hard places to persevere with courage in community with God and each other. Pray for their fearless witness to lead many to faith in Jesus Christ.

“Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.”

Daniel 6:10

Daniel disciplined himself, in good times and bad, to maintain a regular posture of prayer and communication with God in his upstairs room that faced Jerusalem. He prayed there three times a day: in the morning, at midday, and in the evening.

In some parts of the world, laws prohibit prayer to God or the worship of God. If you find yourself in such a place, today’s

This lesson inspires us to keep practicing our Christian faith without fear and unfaithful compromise. It may not protect us from arrest, but it will maintain our relationship with God.

Scripture suggests to keep praying in your proverbial upstairs room. Although this sounds as if it would have been a private place, in antiquity, an upstairs room was visible from the tops of other homes. Daniel’s faith was known to others. He had nothing to hide.

This lesson inspires us to keep practicing our Christian faith without fear and unfaithful compromise. It may not protect us from arrest, but it will maintain our relationship with God. And don’t miss Daniel’s posture. He’s on his

knees and giving thanks to God. We see humility and gratitude. What if you prayed three times a day from that posture?

God, I approach You with humility, gratitude, and trust. Amen.

How do disciplines like praying three times a day shape us when we do them? Do you have an upper room in which to pray? Locate one.

“My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, Your Majesty.”

Daniel 6:22

Daniel received punishment for disobeying a decree of man and maintaining his relationship with God. It happens in places of persecution. For this act, he got tossed into the den of lions.

God found Daniel innocent, so He miraculously delivered him. God shut the mouths of the lions to save Daniel's life. We see stories like this in Scripture not to show us how God will work every time but to show us how He has worked in the past. He can intervene. He can turn terrifying, bloodthirsty lions into friendly cats, the most hostile environment into a comfortable place, and a den of beasts into a lounge zone.

Shutting the mouths of the lions reflects God's sovereignty over creation. The wind and waves obey Him, and so do the animals. This teaches us that when we find ourselves in an impossible situation, God can do anything. Remember, he used ravens to feed Elijah twice a day during a drought. What conclusion can we draw from today's reading? Do not pray for animals to save you. Nurture your walk with God. And don't be surprised if His intervention shows His sovereignty over creation. Remember, He can do anything to save the innocent.

Nurture your walk with God. And don't be surprised if his intervention shows His sovereignty over creation. Remember, He can do anything to save the innocent.

God, I believe you can do anything to save the innocent. Amen.

Many Bible verses recount the cries of the innocent to God. Do some research. Look up a few passages. Memorize one or more. We suggest you commit Psalm 26 to memory.

“Then King Darius wrote to all the nations and peoples of every language in all the earth: ‘May you prosper greatly! I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel. For he is the living God and He endures forever; His kingdom will not be destroyed, His dominion will never end.’”

Daniel 6:10

We love this verse as it reflects the two-part response of the king after God delivered Daniel from the lions. The king directed the first part to Daniel. The king announced a blessing for him to “prosper greatly” and shared it with every language on earth.

Think about it. Those who take refuge in God can anticipate problems. But they can also look forward to prosperity. They will be well known and much respected for their faithfulness to God.

We live in days when kings proclaim that “God is dead!” Rather than arguing with such people, we learn from Daniel that we must show them by our faith and our fortitude. God is not dead but as alive as ever.

The second part relates to God. Darius celebrates God as living, enduring forever, indestructible, and eternal. Consider how each of these traits teaches us about the refuge of God. Taken together, they teach us that God has been, is, and always will be alive. We live in days when kings proclaim that “God

is dead!” Rather than arguing with such people, we learn from Daniel that we must show them by our faith and our fortitude. God is not dead but as alive as ever.

God, whether I suffer horribly or prosper greatly, cause my life to proclaim to the world that You are alive. Amen.

The best way to tell the world to make God their refuge is to show them. How can you show your faith to those around you?

“For no word from God will ever fail.’ ‘I am the Lord’s servant,’ Mary answered. ‘May your word to me be fulfilled.’ Then the angel left her.”

Luke 1:37-38

Imagine the angel’s visit to Mary, announcing that she would conceive by the Holy Spirit and give birth to Jesus, the Messiah. Her response shows her faith. She says that “no word from God will ever fail.” In short, she believed it would happen just as the angel said.

From Mary, we learn a valuable lesson about making God our refuge: trust every word from God completely. Mary never flinched or fought for her own desires. She listened and embraced God’s new plan for her life. She showed perfect submission. We do well to follow suit.

From Mary we learn a valuable lesson about making God our refuge: trust every word from God completely.

Also, notice that Mary saw herself rightly in relationship to God. As the Lord’s servant, she stood ready to do whatever the Lord asked her to do. Only people who make God their refuge take this humble position with such confidence and commitment.

The decision to carry the Christ child would change everything for Mary for the rest of her life. She welcomed the task as God’s will for her. May we have the same receptivity as we make God our refuge.

God, thank You that I can trust every word from You. I am Your servant. May Your word be fulfilled in my life. Amen.

To have confidence in God’s Word, we need to know it well. If you aren’t blocking off time to read the Bible every day, start today.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son”

John 3:16-18

God loves you. Sit in that reality for a moment. When life is full of hurt or God seems distant or silent toward you, it can seem hard to believe. Perhaps you have heard someone say, “If God loves me, then why would He allow this or that to happen?” Maybe you have thought this. It’s okay. We have thought it too. But when we step back from our temporal situations, we discover that because of His great love, He sent His Son to accomplish something bigger for us, our eternal salvation.

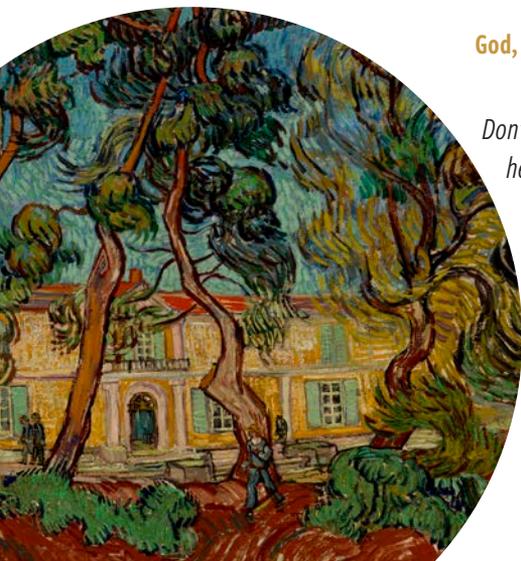
Through the work of Jesus for us on the cross, He solved our sin problem. We can spend eternity with Him. To receive this gift, all we need to do is believe.

Each of us will die – some from sickness, others from crashes, crimes, or other causes of death. God made us to live with Him forever, but our sin separates us

from Him. Through the work of Jesus for us on the cross, He solved our sin problem. We can spend eternity with Him. To receive this gift, all we need to do is believe.

God, I believe. Help me in my unbelief. Amen.

Don’t let your current hurt cause you to miss God’s help for you. Jesus is like a life preserver tossed to us by God. We need to grab hold. Do you believe? If it seems hard, ask for help. He will help you.



“He replied, ‘You of little faith, why are you so afraid?’ Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.”

Matthew 8:26

When Jesus speaks into a situation, it goes from chaos to completely calm. If chaos describes your current condition, then take heart. This reading is for you. If not, it will make sense on your next crazy day.

The disciples were overcome by fear because they looked at the storm instead of the Savior, their difficulty and not their Deliverer, and the crisis instead of Christ. Rather than judge them, we do well to admit that we do the same thing in hard times. Sometimes we find ourselves in the storm of emotions, and we need Jesus to calm us down.

If we want to experience God as our Refuge who can make things completely calm, then we must keep our eyes on Jesus.

If we want to experience God as our REFUGE who can make things calm, then we must keep our eyes on Jesus. When we do, our faith, rather than our fear, dictates our responses to situations.

Imagine how this might shape our witness as well! People do not sense a need for God on good days. But on bad ones, they look with desperation. What if they saw us completely calm?

God, please make me calm in the storm of my fears and help me focus on You in times of crisis. Amen.

We suggest you pray a centering prayer daily (or multiple times per day) to help you remain completely calm. Consider the Surrender Novena: “Jesus, I surrender myself to you. Take care of everything.” Such simple prayers help us keep our focus on Christ.

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Matthew 28:19-20

The Great Commission to make disciples and teach them everything Jesus has taught us comes with a special promise. Jesus concludes by saying, “Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

If we summed up this charge in two words, we would hear Jesus proclaim, “With you!” We hear these words in all the best Bible verses.

If we summed up this charge in two words, we would hear Jesus proclaim, “With you!” We hear these words in all the best Bible verses. Remember the charge from Moses to Joshua. “Be strong and courageous ... for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.” Or consider the proclamation of Isaiah the prophet: “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” Or Paul’s last words to the church in Rome, “The God of peace be with you all. Amen.” We find this amazing expression 384 times

in Scripture. It seems fitting that these words, “with you,” should be connected to Christ who has become our refuge, because He calls himself “Immanuel,” which means “God with us.”

Our mission, and even our survival in this world, would be impossible without God’s presence in our life and without His supernatural power at work in us. He is both with us and empowering us.

Jesus, I celebrate You as my refuge. I hear You say “with you” to me through Your Word, and it fills my heart with joy. Amen.

Pick a “with you” verse. Memorize it. Share it in your social media.

“Now a man who was lame from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts.”

Acts 3:2

The man had been lame from birth. Imagine his hard, hopeless, and monotonous existence. Every day, others carried him and set him in a place where he could beg for alms. He had never walked. He never dreamed that he would ever walk. He relied on others to survive.

In this scene, we find the lame man taking refuge by a particular gate. As names matter in biblical stories, we discover the name *Beautiful*, which, though common in English, was rare in the New Testament. In fact, this Greek word appears only here in the New Testament. *Beautiful* implies physical beauty but also refers to something divinely planned and perfectly timed. This reveals a deep idea for us: God makes the man beautiful in His time.

Beautiful implies physical beauty but also refers to something divinely planned and perfectly timed. This reveals a deep idea for us: God makes the man beautiful in His time.

Perhaps you find yourself in a similar situation. Some difficulty has left you disabled or dependent on others. You cannot comprehend that your situation could ever change. What should you do? Ask those around you to put you by the Beautiful gate. We don't mean a physical location, but a spiritual doorway to a new future. Your place of pain and injustice could be a place of God's miracle and salvation.

God, I feel hopeless. I cannot imagine good in my future. Find me by this Beautiful gate. Make a doorway for me to find hope. Amen.

In this scene, Peter and John bring healing to the man. Ask God to bring people into your life to help you find healing and hope.

“He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’ ‘Who are you, Lord?’ Saul asked. ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ he replied.”

Acts 9:4-5

Here, Jesus appears to Saul and describes Himself as the one whom Saul was persecuting. This teaches us that when people persecute or hate us, it is really Jesus whom they hate. Consider how this truth can minister to those who experience real suffering while following Him.

A common response for victims of harassment or hardship is: “Why me?” This text offers the answer. We can expect mistreatment because we declare allegiance to Christ who suffered it first. And while this truth does not change the situation, it does explain it. The world hates us, because the world hated Jesus. It means we are not alone. He suffers with us and even works through us to save our haters.

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Notice Saul’s response: “Who are you, Lord?” It shows us that he did not know Jesus and yet reveals submission to Him. This teaches us that God can convert the merciless and murderous. Every moment of our suffering for Christ could be a mission moment for those who hate us.

Not only that, but He can also make them productive for the Kingdom. He turned *Saul* into *Paul* who became the catalyst of the Christian movement across the entirety of the ancient Mediterranean world.

God, thanks for helping me see the reason behind persecution. I pray that You will transform oppressors today as You did with Paul. Amen.

Statistics show that about 13 Christians per day die for their faith. Pray daily for perseverance and the conversion of their oppressors.

“The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. ‘Quick, get up!’ he said, and the chains fell off Peter’s wrists. Then the angel said to him, ‘Put on your clothes and sandals.’ And Peter did so. ‘Wrap your cloak around you and follow me,’ the angel told him.”

Acts 12:6-8

God works suddenly. The word “suddenly” carries the interpretive meaning of divine intervention overcoming difficulty and impossibility.

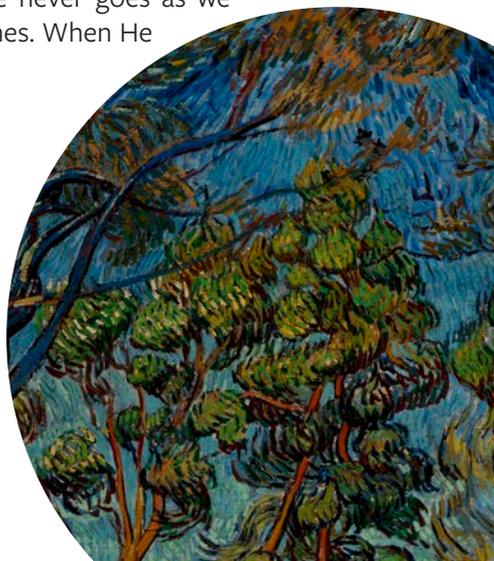
Peter was surrounded by soldiers and bound in chains. His situation appeared hopeless. But even in this dark place, we see Peter sleeping like a baby. We notice the church praying and God sending help. Peter had no expectations as to when and how help would come, but he trusted the Lord completely. When God is our refuge, sometimes we get to wait. At other times, He chooses to act suddenly. And our only response, like Peter’s, is to follow.

The angel of the Lord struck him to get his attention. Do you sense God doing the same to you? If so, get dressed, put on your sandals for the journey, and follow.

The angel of the Lord struck him to get his attention. Do you sense God doing the same to you? If so, get dressed, put on your sandals for the journey, and follow. Life never goes as we expect. Sometimes God divinely intervenes. When He acts suddenly, follow.

God, when You act suddenly, give me courage to follow. Amen.

Can you think of a time in your life when God acted suddenly toward you or someone else? What can you learn from that situation?



“Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant named Rhoda came to answer the door. When she recognized Peter’s voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, ‘Peter is at the door!’ ‘You’re out of your mind,’ they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, ‘It must be his angel.’ But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished.”

Acts 12:13-16

Just when God’s people gathered to pray for Peter, God acted suddenly and delivered him. But when he came to the door, despite Rhoda’s joy, they did not believe it was him. They were astonished.

When we pray, we must abandon our agendas and take the posture of submission that we see in the Lord’s Prayer.

Rather than criticizing them for their lack of faith, let us consider how we behave in a similar way. In hard times, we sometimes pray with an agenda. We make God our refuge, but we also expect Him to hear our prayers or work in a specific way. When He acts suddenly, we find ourselves surprised or astonished. What’s the lesson for us?

When we pray, we must abandon our agendas and take the posture of submission that we see in the Lord’s Prayer. God might deliver us from tribulation miraculously, or He might act in some other way. When we take refuge in Him, we trust Him to decide what is best.

God, I trust You to work in the way You decide is best. Amen.

Have you ever felt surprised or astonished at how God responded to your prayers? How might this shape your prayers in the future?



“On the fourteenth night we were still being driven across the Adriatic Sea, when about midnight the sailors sensed they were approaching land. They took soundings and found that the water was a hundred and twenty feet deep. A short time later they took soundings again and found it was ninety feet deep. Fearing that we would be dashed against the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for daylight.”

Acts 27:27-29

This dramatic scene offers insight for Christians in crisis situations: take two soundings, drop four anchors, and pray for daylight.

To take soundings in antiquity, a sailor tied a heavy object to a rope and lowered it in the water. When the line went slack, it revealed that the weight had hit the seafloor. Then, the sailor measured the rope to calculate the depth. By taking a second sounding, the sailor could assess the situation further prior to acting. To drop four anchors referred to taking every possible measure to secure the position of the ship. And to pray for daylight shows where they placed their trust to survive.

Are you in a dark or stormy situation? If so, use the means around you to assess the situation and bring stability. From there, pray for daylight. Pray for the storm to subside and grace to survive. In this case, Paul suffered shipwreck and survived. Hopefully, you will too.

Are you in a dark or stormy situation? If so, use the means around you to assess the situation and bring stability. From there, pray for daylight.

God, thanks for teaching me how to navigate a storm. Amen.

What anchors might you drop to secure your position in a crisis?

“When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they asked His disciples: ‘Why does He eat with tax collectors and sinners?’ On hearing this, Jesus said to them, ‘It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.’”

Mark 2:16-17

We chose the *Hospital at Saint-Rémy* by Vincent Van Gogh for the cover of this devotional for a reason. Vincent went there to find help in crisis. This illustrates today’s Scripture and the theme of this entire devotional book. Jesus did not come to call the righteous but sinners. He came to save all those seeking help and refuge in Him.

Though the need for refuge seems greatest for people in crisis situations – war, persecution, natural disaster, or other calamity

Whether you have walked with God your entire life or today marks the first day, Jesus wants you to find refuge in Him. If you feel lost or homeless, you can find a home with Him.

– everyone needs God’s help for deliverance from the power and penalty of sin. Most people do not move toward God in good times. But when sick or struggling in bad times, they turn to God and find the healing and hope they have looked for and longed for their entire life.

Where are you today? Whether you have walked with God your entire life or today marks the first

day, Jesus wants you to find refuge in Him. If you feel lost or homeless, you can find a home with Him.

Jesus, I am not better than other sinners, I am sick and sinful. Please heal and forgive me. Amen.

Vincent found community at the hospital. Find a church where you can get the support you need to face the challenges of life.

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

John 16:33

In the journey of writing this devotional, we came across numerous biblical texts urging us to “take heart.” Few touch us more deeply than this one as it flows from the lips of our Lord Jesus.

When we face troubles, we need to remember that Jesus told us we would. Our tendency in such times tends toward worry and fear. Instead, Jesus wants us to have peace, knowing that we can overcome difficulties because He has overcome the world.

In a word, this statement from Jesus reminds us that whatever hard times we endure, we must see them as only temporary. This truth enlivens us to take heart. It also positions us to help others.

Henry David Thoreau once wrote, “The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.” This implies that most people live an empty and hopeless existence. When we take heart, we help people shift from quiet desperation to joyous hope. That’s what happens when we take refuge in God.

When we take heart, we help people shift from quiet desperation to joyous hope. That’s what happens when we take refuge in God.

God, help me show others what it means to take heart. Amen.

Every day the media reports troubles around the world. How might today’s Scripture serve as good news in conversations?



“I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice He judges and wages war.”

Revelation 19:11

Although much of Revelation seems confusing to most people, one thing comes into view as crystal clear. Christ will reign victoriously in the end. Our Lord Jesus Christ—Faithful and True—will bring justice and peace to the whole earth. Don’t miss the implications of this.

The wars that wage around us will cease one day. The persecution that tortures God’s righteous servants in countries and regions will stop. The corrupt systems that oppress the underprivileged will end. And the diseases that run rampant among the poor will disappear. Our Faithful and True Lord Jesus Christ will bring an end to sorrow, suffering, and pain. He is coming soon, very soon. That’s good news.

Our Faithful and True Lord Jesus Christ will bring an end to sorrow, suffering, and pain. He is coming soon, very soon. That’s good news. Share this widely.

Share this widely. It gives hope to the hopeless, help to the helpless, and comfort to those who are crushed in spirit. It lifts those who are down and

gives courage to the discouraged. Because our Lord Jesus Christ is Faithful and True, we can never be disappointed.

Jesus, because You are Faithful and True, I give thanks that I know I can always and forever depend on You. Amen!

Ask God to guide you to victims of war, injustice, corruption, or calamity. Listen to their problems and pain. Don’t try to solve them. Love them and point them to the One who is Faithful and True.

**“Cast all your anxiety on Him
because He cares for you.”**

1 Peter 5:7

The fact that God serves as our refuge implies deliverance and salvation. He wants to exchange our anxiety for care, our fears for his peace, and our worries for His love. This care should alert us to how special we are to Him.

Picture someone you care deeply about—perhaps a family member or a close friend you love. How do you treat that person? You send messages to them. You give them gifts. You think about their needs and try to bless them with thoughtfulness. You do things to show them how much you care for them.

***God wants to serve
as your refuge today,
tomorrow, and every day
for the rest of your life.***

Now imagine that the God of the universe has that posture toward you. The God who created everything, including you, cares deeply for you. He loves you. He does not want you to go through life feeling troubled, though the world has many troubles. He does not want you to live in fear. God wants to serve as your refuge today, tomorrow, and every day for the rest of your life. And hopefully, as people see the impact that love has on you, they too will want to know Him and find refuge in Him.

**God, thank You that You care so much and so deeply
for me. I give You my anxieties and choose to rest in
Your unfailing love. Amen.**

Start a list, perhaps in your journal, of all the ways you notice that God cares for you. Add to the list periodically. Do this to cultivate a heart of gratitude and as a testimony to others.

“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. ... Come and see what the Lord has done, the desolations He has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; He burns the shields with fire. He says, ‘Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.’”

Psalm 46:1, 8-10

The sons of Korah wrote Psalm 46. It opens with a bold description of God as our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. That speaks to His reliability. He does not belong to any ethnic group or culture. He does not work for any business or political party. He is always there for all those willing to declare their trust in Him.

As our refuge, God is both reliable and relevant. That means He is not just what you and I need. He’s what everyone, everywhere, is looking for.

As the psalm progresses, the psalmists shift to inviting us to come and see the many things the Lord has done. Then, the sons of Korah announce God’s explicit instruction to us: be still. In remaining still before God, we watch, learn, and come to know His greatness that will be exalted across all peoples. This illustrates His relevance to us as His Church gathered from all the nations.

As our refuge, God is both reliable and relevant. That means He is not just what you and I need—He’s what everyone everywhere is looking for. Only God fills the need in the hearts of all humankind.

God, thank You for being ever-present. I exalt You. Amen.

Does someone you know need to read REFUGE? Ask God to guide you to one or more people and share it with them. Maybe read it together and talk about it. It just might change their life..

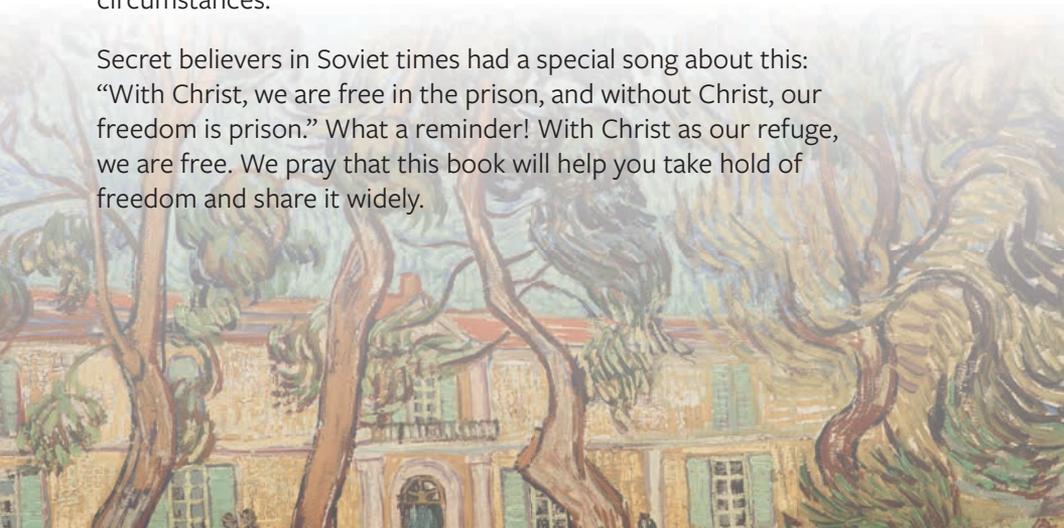
As we prepared this collection of devotionals at GTP, we had war-torn Ukraine and the persecuted church in mind. We also envisioned sharing this with suffering Christians in Nigeria, Syria, and other places riddled with corruption, oppression, crisis, and death.

We wrote REFUGE to stand in solidarity with those who suffer. We also desire to unite Christians in every language, country, and generation. We want to help Christians everywhere to find God as their refuge and strength, so that they can comfort His suffering Church.

Although our passports say we are Ukrainian and American by origin, we declare the truth that there is no Ukrainian or American church. We are members of one body – one global Church – that serves one Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And when one member suffers, all suffer.

Together we proclaim “with you” to our brothers and sisters who suffer for their faith and faithfulness to Christ in the most difficult situations and darkest places of our world. We want everyone to take heart and have courage despite hard circumstances.

Secret believers in Soviet times had a special song about this: “With Christ, we are free in the prison, and without Christ, our freedom is prison.” What a reminder! With Christ as our refuge, we are free. We pray that this book will help you take hold of freedom and share it widely.





Michael (Mykhailo) Cherenkov has more than 20 years of experience in international missions in Eastern Europe and post-Soviet countries as field ministries director, educator, pastor, and board member of different NGOs, including GTP. He has a passion to equip the next generation of ministry workers to teach and practice theologically sound, intellectually creative, culturally relevant, and financially sustainable ministry.

Born in Soviet Russia and raised in Ukraine in the family of a former prisoner of conscience, he is the author of several books and has an MA in history and a Ph.D. in religious studies.



Gary G. Hoag serves as President and CEO of Global Trust Partners. The purpose of GTP is to multiply faithful stewards and mobilize peer accountability groups to build trust and grow local generous giving to God's work. This service springs from extensive international ministry, a desire to empower national workers, and his personal commitment to dedicate his life to encouraging Christian generosity. He received his

Ph.D. in New Testament from Trinity College, Bristol, UK. He teaches at seminaries around the world, speaks widely, posts *Daily Meditations*, and has written more than ten books.



Global Trust Partners (GTP) was formed in 2018 by ECFA (ecfa.org) as a separate entity to extend the work of enhancing trust in Christ-centered churches and ministries around the world. In obedient service to Jesus Christ, GTP multiplies faithful stewards and mobilizes peer accountability groups to build trust and grow local giving to God's work. By prayer, fasting, and confession, GTP employs four strategies—teaching, training, teamwork, and toolbox—to empower stewards to help ministries follow standards for sustainability. Learn more at gtp.org.



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Hospital at Saint-Rémy, 1889
The Armand Hammer Collection,
Gift of the Armand Hammer Foundation,
Hammer Museum, Los Angeles.