



LENT DEVOTIONAL

[LEARN MORE PROGRAM](#)[APPLY ONLINE](#)[VISIT CAMPUS](#)[REQUEST INFO](#)

LENTEN DEVOTIONAL FEBRUARY 27, 2023

SCRIPTURE

PSALM 121

- 1 I lift up my eyes to the hills—
from where will my help come?
- 2 My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.
- 3 He will not let your foot be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.
- 4 He who keeps Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.
- 5 The Lord is your keeper;
the Lord is your shade at your right hand.
- 6 The sun shall not strike you by day,
nor the moon by night.

7 The Lord will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.
8 The Lord will keep
your going out and your coming in
from this time on and forevermore.

DEVOTIONAL

The Rev. Dr. L. Roger Owens, Hugh Thomson Kerr Professor of Pastoral Theology

When I noticed several occurrences of the verb “keep” in this psalm, a translation of the Hebrew word *shamar*, I thought of the penalty shootout that climaxed the 2022 World Cup soccer tournament. With the kickers having a distinct advantage, the goalkeepers faced enormous pressure to prevent the ball from entering the goal. More often than not, they failed.

I struggled to imagine God that way—diving in front of evil, keeping us from danger. Sometimes deflecting it, sometimes not. Is that what “he will keep your life” means in this passage? Is a harried goalkeeper an appropriate image for God?

Perhaps Genesis 2:15 can help: “The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till and to keep it.” The word *shamar* occurs for the first time in Scripture in this verse. The image here is of a gardener, patiently caring for the soil, working to preserve its health and fruitfulness.

What would happen if we read Psalm 121 with that connotation in mind? We’d get an image of a God who tends us as a faithful gardener tends the soil, a God who keeps us—not diving to deflect every evil and pain, sometimes missing—but tending us despite pain, caring for us in the midst of a life where things sometimes go wrong, working faithful for our flourishing and fruitfulness.

PRAYER

Gracious God, we pray that as we journey to the cross, we might understand ourselves as fruitful soil, kept by your grace, care, and love. Amen.

ABOUT PITTSBURGH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Rooted in the Reformed tradition, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary is committed to the formation of students for theologically reflective ministry and to scholarship in service to the global Church of Jesus Christ.

BECOME A HYBRID STUDENT

Master's

Doctor of Ministry

Certificates

Non-Degree

PTS NEIGHBORHOOD COLLABORATIVE RESOURCE PROGRAMS

Center for Adaptive and Innovative Ministry

Continuing Education

Faith Forming Families Network

Kelso Museum of Near Eastern Archaeology

Miller Summer Youth Institute

Metro-Urban Institute

World Mission Initiative

FACULTY

In addition to their on-campus duties, our faculty are experts in their fields and are available to preach and teach. Learn more

about their **topics of research and writing** and invite them to present at your congregation or gathering.

EVENTS

The Seminary hosts a wide range of events—many of them free!—on topics of faith including church planting, mission, vocation, spiritual formation, pastoral care and counseling, archaeology, and many more. Visit our **calendar** often for a listing of upcoming events.

VISIT PTS

Interested in the Seminary? **Come visit us!**

STAY IN TOUCH WITH PTS

Sign-up to receive the Seminary's newsletters: Seminary News (monthly), Center for Adaptive and Innovative Ministry, Continuing Education, Faith Forming Families Network, Kelso Museum, Metro-Urban Institute, Miller Summer Youth Institute, and World Mission Initiative. Alums, there's also one for you!

Pittsburgh Theological Seminary
616 North Highland Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15206
Phone: 412-362-5610



FIND YOUR PROGRAM

REQUEST INFO

APPLY ONLINE

VISIT THE CAMPUS

News & Events**Contact****Directions****Employment** **Save Page As PDF**

Privacy Policy

COVID-19

Accessibility

Anti-Discrimination

Title IX And Anti-Harassment