

Our Rock

David Lyons at the Senior Navigators Celebration 2025

Prayer of An Old Man

When Joe asked me to speak tonight, I thought, “Joe! I’m on sabbatical!” But the Spirit prompted me to at least look at the theme passage, Psalm 71.

[Slide 2a] I noticed that it’s called a “Prayer of an Old Man for Deliverance.” I tried not to take that too personally! Then I took a closer look at it for myself, and two hours later I came up for air and the Lord whispered to me, “David, I’m inviting you to keep feasting on this psalm. We’ll feed the conference with the leftovers.”

Two things are true of us in this room: We are seniors, and we are Navigators. So maybe this could be a prayer of a senior Navigator because it answers 2 important questions for us in this season of our lives:

1. [2b] What do we need to know (really know) about God in this season of our lives?
2. [2c] What does the next generation need from us?

[3] Skip Gray used to say that aging is not for sissies. You can see that in how this old man prayed:

- “Don’t be far from me!” V12
- “Rescue me.... From the adversaries of my soul.” VV4-5, 13
- “Do not forsake me when my strength fails.” V9
- “Do not cast me off in the time of my old age.” V9

[4] But Pete Scazzero once said something that expresses a counterbalancing perspective: “The best decade of your life will be your seventies, the second best will be your eighties, and the third will be your sixties.” By best he did not mean the happiest... but our richest and most joyful and helpful to others.” Do you find that hard to believe? Psalm 71 shows how this can become the best season of our lives:

[5] Let’s start with the first three verses:

*In You, O Lord, I have taken refuge;
Let me never be ashamed.
In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me;
Incline Your ear to me and save me.
Be to me a rock of habitation
To which I may continually come
You have given commandment to save me;
For You are my rock and my fortress.*

Here’s the first thing that we will need for this to become the best season of our lives:

[6] 1. His Companionship

"Be to me a rock of habitation to which I may continually come." Psalm 71:3a

Proverbs 25:17 warns, *"Let your foot rarely be in your neighbor's house, or he will become weary of you,"* but the psalmist is asking for the kind of relationship with God where the One who knocks at the doors of our hearts so that He can come in and enjoy a meal with us, wants us to come to His place continually, to linger because He wants a deeper and deeper friendship with us. That is a prayer that God is eager to answer.

A couple of years ago I gathered several of my longstanding friends for what we called a Finishing Well Retreat, and I came out of that weekend excited about this next season of my life because I sensed God saying that in this season He intends to take me deeper into friendship with Him.

I love that about Him. He's still shepherding me. He's still discipling me. He wants more than ever to be my rock of habitation to which I continually come.

But He wants to give us even more than His companionship because He knows that we'll need more:

[7] 2. His Protection

"You have given commandment to save me, for You are My rock and my fortress." Psalm 71:3b

Why would we need a fortress or a stronghold in this season of life? Don't we get to go on vacation for the rest of the cruise? I'm afraid not. We need a fortress now because finishing well is not automatic, because we have an enemy who is determined to keep us from finishing well.

42 years ago, I asked Jim Downing why so few men finish well. It was clear that he'd thought carefully about that question. He said, *"It's because they learn that it's possible to be fruitful without being pure... for a season. God is very slow to remove His hand of blessing from a man when he sins, so he begins to think that his little sins don't matter, until he becomes a hollow imitation of what he once was."*

I recently shared that story with a friend who told me that around that same time he was in small gathering with Walt Henrichsen and who shared how he'd been thinking about Solomon who was such a lover of God when he was young. But he had one area where he did not obey, marrying foreign wives. Walt said that God put up with it for a time, but eventually that foothold of Satan steamrolled him.

Our enemy knows that God intends that these become our most fruitful years, and it determined to stop that through slow leaks and his other strategies. So, we need to consistently live in God's protection. The old man who wrote Psalm 71 knew that he needed God's protection to finish well, so he prayed like

Moses used to pray, reminding God of His promises and His character. *You have promised to save me because that's Your nature. You are my rock and my stronghold.*

I love this about God. He saved me back in 1972 at a Billy Graham crusade in the old Cleveland Indians Stadium. But He's still saving me today. He's my Today Savior.

Our need for Him as our rock and our stronghold increases as we mature and we become more dangerous to our enemy. Our need for Him becomes greater as we become weaker, and our weakness makes more room for His supernatural enabling grace.

The word for rock here is literally a crag, a crack or cave in a mountain where we can hide, like the crag where old Moses hid as God revealed more of Himself, like the cave where old Elijah was resting when he experienced an earthquake, then a storm, then the still small voice of God. Do you want to know God's protection like they did? I do.

That leads to the third thing we need for this to be the best season of our lives:

[8] 3. His Assignment

"Even when I am old and gray, O God, do not forsake me, until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to all who are to come." Psalm 71:18

Too many older believers are just going through the motions. Too many older believers have become hollow imitations of what they once were and what God intends for them to become.

The next generation needs to see our lives declare God's strength and power as we experience His companionship and protection. Our weakness is the best backdrop for them to see God's strength in us. God has many ways of ensuring that His strength is perfected and brought to full expression in our weakness. Paul listed a few in 2 Corinthians 12:

- Thorns in the flesh
- Distresses
- Being persecuted or mistreated
- Difficulties
- Being dismissed as not having leadership authority

[9] The next verse shows that God is not afraid to allow difficulties into our lives to accomplish greater things: *"You Who have shown me many troubles and distresses will revive me again, and will bring me up again from the depths of the earth."* It's in the midst of those troubles, distresses, and depths that we learn to more deeply experience God as our rock and our stronghold.

Here is something that I wrote in my journal as I was experiencing some of those troubles God allows:

- *[10] Yesterday I was reminded that it seems important to many to say that God would never hurt us. That line of thinking concerns me deeply because it sets up people to become disillusioned with God... or with those who teach such things. It also concerns me because it requires disregarding so much of how God reveals himself in the Scriptures. And it touches on an open nerve for me as we walk through painful circumstances with our son. Has God forgotten us? No! Is God mad at us! I don't think so.*
- *[11] This brings me back to something that has become more and more precious to me: "Seasoned Trust." Naïve trust says, "God will always work out things the way I want them to be. Notice the big "I" in that sentence. Seasoned Trust says, "God might hurt me, but I trust Him anyway." Why would I trust Him anyway? I've seen so much of His love and goodness in the Scriptures and in my life. So, the torrents of pain have to flow around those immoveable rocks.*
- *[12] Trust is the cord that keeps me lashed to the mast as the hurricane seems to be tearing everything else from its moorings. Trust enables me to trace the ways of God's decisions. Trust keeps hope alive and even eager as it waits. Trust nurtures and protects my memory of what is true and right. Trust protects my longing for God when it might have been extinguished. Trust strengthens my spirit to keep looking for God when He seems so far away.*

Seasoned trust is what the next generation needs to see growing in us to show them how to trust God for greater things in their own lives.

[13] The next verse goes on to ask that in the midst of our troubles and distresses, "May You increase my greatness and turn to comfort me." In this broken world we don't get to choose a pain free life. But we do get to choose whether our pain makes us less or makes us more.

Here is a short video that I made a few years ago, that gives you a glimpse of how the next generation in my family is learning to become more:

[14] [Becoming More Video]

[15a] Moses became more as he grew into his final assignment.

I am thrilled that God is growing a righteous remnant within the next generation. In every generation God focuses on a righteous remnant. It can be hard to find. Moses experienced that. He would get disgusted with the next generation and complain to God about them. He was tempted to become their critic, but he learned to become their intercessor. Then he spent the next 40 years of his life cultivating a righteous remnant that would rise up and go beyond him in inheriting what God had promised. The entire book of Deuteronomy is Moses' final effort to prepare the next generation to go beyond him to inherit what God had promised.

[15b] Moses closed his final exhortations with a song where he poured out his heart for them. His song begins with these words in Deuteronomy 32: *“Let my teaching drop as the rain, My speech distill as the dew, as the droplets on the fresh grass and as the showers on the herb. For I proclaim the name of the Lord; Ascribe greatness to our God! THE ROCK!”*

I don’t know how you feel about the next generation of Navigators, but here is what I’m asking God to do: *I am asking God to grow a new generation of Navigator leaders who not only grasp the Core, but lead into far greater fulfillment of God’s vision for us than we have dared to imagine.*

[16] Conclusion

So, there are God’s answers to the prayers of an old man who prayed into what we most need to know about God in this season of our lives, and what the next generation most needs to see in us:

- God’s companionship
- God’s protection
- God’s assignment

I feel led to close with a song. Not Moses’ song, but a song that I’ve long felt should be an anthem for Navigators around the world. I think it expresses the heartbeat of Psalm 71. This song is my prayer, and may it become your prayer as you listen:

[17-24] [Nothing Less](#)