

Illustrated Bible Life

In the Shadow of His Wings

One of the things I like most about preparing *Illustrated Bible Life* for publication is choosing the photos. It is always a challenge to come up with new ideas and images each quarter. Some quarters are easy: When we cover major events in the lives of Jesus and the disciples, or foundational stories from Genesis, there is an abundance of artwork based on those events. For almost the entirety of the centuries since the resurrection of Jesus Christ, every major Western artist has taken on the sacrifice of Isaac, for instance, or Jesus healing the sick. One can find multiple images depicting these events in the artistic styles of the ages.

On the other hand, other quarters are difficult: Romans is heavily theological and thus, images expressing the concepts Paul presents don't easily spring to mind. The Psalms are another genre that isn't easily expressed in images. The psalmist expresses a number of emotions, but emotions are not always easy to depict.

Fortunately, metaphorical language often comes to the rescue. For instance, Psalm 36:7 says, "How priceless is your unfailing love, O God! People take refuge in the shadow of your wings," and Psalm 63:7 says, "Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings." "In the shadow of your wings" would have brought to mind a couple of images in biblical times. One of those images is the ark of the covenant. The ancient Israelites would have been familiar with the description of the ark even if they hadn't personally seen it. They would have known that the cherubim on the cover of the ark were positioned with their wings extending over the ark. It was a symbol of God's protection.

The other image that would have come to mind is that of a mother bird with her chicks gathered under her wings. Many of us today spend little time outdoors observing nature, so we may never have seen a sight like this, but the ancients were much more familiar with God's creation. It would have been a common sight in the spring to see chicks huddled under their mother's wings.

The image of a mother hen with her chicks gathered under her wings can be found on page 10 in this issue. In a previous issue, we featured a similar photo to illustrate the same concept. This is a common metaphor for the protection we may expect from our God as we face trials, challenges, and even disasters in our lives. How grateful we can be that our God is hovering over us, fiercely protecting us and compassionately caring for us, just as a mother bird gathers her chicks under her wings!